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RTY YEARS OF SONG

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FORTY YEARS OF SONG

Madame Albani.

FORTY YEARS OF SONG

BY

EMMA ALBANI

ILLUSTRATED

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After forty years before the Public; it is thirty nine years since I made my début in England at Covent Garden Theatre, and after having sung in nearly every country in the world. I venture to offer an account of my career hoping that my many friends may find it interesting

In writing this I have endeavoured to avoid as far as possible dwelling upon the successes I have been fortunate enough to meet with, and have only set down what actually happened, feeling that I owe much to the indul-gence invariably shewn me by my audiences from the outset of my career, and which has filled

one with the deepest gratitude, and encouraged me in my work. Without this I could hardly have achieved what I have —

I have also cause to be thankful that my good constitution and health has enabled me to continuously follow my profession in Opera, Oratorio and Concerts, with the exception of one period of six months in all these forty years. and also, that I have very rarely been obliged through temporary indisposition to disappoint my public —

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I wish to acknowledge with sincere thanks the valuable assistance I have received from Mr. Harold Simpson in completing this book.— E. ALBANI GYE.

FORTY YEARS OF SONG

CHAPTER I

A MUSICAL CHILDHOOD

I WAS born at Chambly, near Montreal in Canada, on November 1, 1852, in the midst of ice and snow, and on the borders of Lake Champlain, into which numerous rivers empty themselves, within sound of the roaring rapids of the River Richelieu, and in sight of the old historical Fort, and the beautiful scenery of the shores which extend for many miles.

I was the eldest daughter of my father, Joseph Lajeunesse, who was a musician, and a skilled player on the organ, the violin, the harp, and the piano.

My great-grandfather was a Frenchman of an old Breton family, who came over and settled in Canada; and my mother, on her mother's side, was of Scotch descent, Mlle. Melina Mignaud, one of a family of twelve.

She was, although only an amateur, an accomplished musician, and when I was not more than four years old she began to teach me music, and continued to do so until I was five, when my father undertook my musical training—for *training* it was, even at that age. By the time I was eight I had made sufficient progress to be able to read at sight almost all the works of the old masters, as well as those of more modern composers.

To this early training I attribute the facility I have always possessed for studying and comprehending the music I have had to sing. I learnt also the harp and the piano, the latter of which has, of course, been of the greatest assistance to me and of the utmost value to my work. From the age of five until I left for Europe, my father was my sole teacher.

The early days of my childhood were so taken up with study that I had but little time for play, but I can well recall the occasion on which my childish mind woke up, as it were, to the extreme beauties of nature and the lovely scenery which surrounds my early home. It was once when I had been away for some time, and on my return I seemed suddenly to see and to *feel* the wonders of Nature, and the marvellous beauty all around me. It

spoke to me for the first time as music was speaking to me, and in every country where I have travelled since the beauty of Nature speaks to me still. And the "music" of Nature, be it pastoral or be it grand, ever appeals to me with both pathos and power.

Even at that age I studied music four hours a day. To illustrate how little time I had for childish recreation, I may mention that in later years the editor of one of our magazines which was publishing articles describing the dolls of celebrated women wrote to ask me to tell them "about my dolls." I was obliged to reply that "I never had a doll."

My father's maxim, indeed, was that more haste brings less speed, and morning, noon, and night he would impress on me that I must practise slowly, always slowly, if I wished to derive true benefit. He never would allow me, under any circumstances whatever, to strike a note that I had not first seen clearly in the book, and the fingering, too, he would insist upon my observing with an exactness that was almost punctilious. And he was right, though at the time I found such exactitude not a little irksome to my buoyant temperament. Often, too, he would

insist upon my counting aloud, but without my ever being allowed either to press the movement or to slow it unduly.

Sometimes his friends would find fault with him for this. " Lajeunesse," I remember hearing one of my father's greatest friends say to him one day, " the strain you place upon the child is too great; believe me, she will be unable to withstand it, and in years to come she will suffer." But my father only laughed, and since that day I have often laughed too; for I had greater confidence in my father's method than in his friend's advice. How distinctly I can remember all that; and yet I was only five at the time!

My grandfather had a pretty house and garden, and we lived in a small house close by on his property. It was there that I was born. My grandfather sang extremely well, and my father was organist at the church near.

My mother being the eldest of a large family, our younger aunts were of the same age as my brother, sister, and myself, and one was younger still, so that as children we all played together and shared in every amusement.

MADAME ALBANI.
(At the age of five years.)

One of our elder aunts, Rose Délima, had an immense and real talent for telling stories. She never acted them in any way, but she would collect any number of children around her, and go on and on, telling them stories, all invented on the spur of the moment, varying each character's voice to such a nicety that the whole tale seemed to *live* as we children sat gazing at her open-eyed and open-mouthed in all-absorbing interest.

Baby as I then was, only five or six years old, from this time I date the origin of whatever histrionic talent I may since have developed, for it was then that the idea seized me to translate my aunt's stories into action and to act them. This idea we all carried out; spending as much of our playtime as we could in turning her imaginative stories into childish plays, as well as trying to represent the pictures which then so often in Canada formed the frontispiece of various songs. I was the moving spirit in this, aided by my brother and sister in the matter of costumes, and what scenic effects our household furniture would supply, and we succeeded so well that we used to be invited over to the English part of Chambly to perform our plays for our friends, and for me to sing the songs.

Any old tablecloth would often do duty for a dress, and I remember our doing " Le Désert " of Félicien David, I sitting on a rock draped in what was meant to be an Eastern costume and singing the song, people being so astonished that I could sing at all at that age. " Le petit Pélérin " was another, and many other old French-Canadian ballads, the names of which escape me now.

Before I was eight I had the misfortune to lose my mother, and soon afterwards I was sent to school (my sister also) to the Convent of the Sacred Heart near Montreal, not far from our birthplace. At this convent my father already taught music, and here I was educated and spent several happy years in the fostering care of the dear old nuns of whom I became so fond, and whom I have since visited from time to time with the greatest pleasure.

After our mother's death our holidays were mostly passed with our grandfather, and my sister and I looked forward to these even more than do many children, for all the simple pleasures possible were given to us, and we thoroughly enjoyed them. Even now, when I think of it, I can almost taste the delicious maple sugar which was grated and

CHAMBLY.

spread on bread and butter and given us for tea, or during the morning, if we happened to be hungry. We really enjoyed ourselves to our hearts' content, not even incurring an accident from our boating adventures. As I look back now I cannot think how it was we were permitted to go in boats quite alone on the Chambly Bassin. We were allowed to do so, however, young as we were, and Providence always brought us safely to land.

But I am speaking more of the others than myself, for in my case my " play " was more generally used to fill up the time necessary for fresh air and exercise, all the rest of the day being devoted to study, and principally to music, either playing or singing. My own favourite outdoor amusement was snow-shoeing, in which rather difficult recreation I believe I was supposed to excel, though that may be accounted for by the nuns very often giving me an extra hour so that I might remain out of doors and benefit by the exercise and invigorating air.

When we first arrived at the convent the nuns were surprised that so young a child could read and play such music as had by then become quite familiar to me. As I

could not help winning the prizes given at the end of each term, I was, after the age of nine, placed *hors de concours*—that is, not any longer allowed to compete.

Periodically we were examined in religion by a priest, Father Saché, well known in all the district round, who lived near and attended at the convent. He used to lecture to us on sacred subjects; we had to listen attentively and write essays on what he had said during the term.

On the "Jour des Prix" (breaking-up day) the girl whose essay was the best had to read it aloud before the whole seventy pupils, the nuns and priests, and others who were present. Some were brave and did not mind, but I was always very timid on such occasions, and when once my essay was chosen I felt as if I could never face the ordeal. I asked to be told exactly what to do and how to walk up, and I read it over and over again to the nuns, until they, and even I myself, thought it was quite safe.

The moment came, and I reached the platform and was going to begin to read, when no sound would come. My voice had fled, and I was literally too frightened to speak. Father Saché looked at me and said

kindly, "Sit down, my child; you cannot recite, but I know if you had to sing it we should all hear it."

A part of the breaking-up ceremonies was also the "tableaux," represented by the pupils from sacred pictures in the convent, the preparations for which often lasted for some months before. The prettiest girls were usually selected, and those with long hair were apt to look most beautiful as angels; but I had never been chosen until one day I was suddenly struck by a picture of St. Anthony, and said to one of the nuns, "Why don't you do that picture?" She and I continued to look at it and consider: the saint was represented in strenuous prayer, clearly trying hard to win away his thoughts from the Puck-like little devil who was mischievously looking close over his shoulder, and tempting him with all his small might and main.

"I am sure I could do that little Devil," I said at last; and the nun agreed. I began my rehearsals, and when the great day came I was "made up" (and what a figure I must have been!) with a blackened face, black clothes, a cap and horns, and *carte blanche* to do any mischievous thing I liked—and I

did. I tickled his ears, I pulled his hair, I screamed in his face, and became such a complete little imp of devilry that the whole assemblage shook with laughter and applauded enthusiastically. The more they applauded the more excited and mischievous I became, until every scrap of nervousness with which I began was merged in such an intense excitement that I was eventually carried off crying hysterically, and was put to bed and kept quiet until my nerves had calmed down. This was my first dramatic effort, and one I have never forgotten.

I was supposed at this time to have a decided vocation for convent life, and had not the Mother Superior been as liberal-minded, good, and " superior " a woman in her nature as she was in her conventual title, I might have been in that convent still. Her name was Madame Trincano, she was an Italian, and to the fact of her nationality and love of music I probably owe the warmth of her appreciation of my voice and, even then, of my singing, for I have seen her kneeling in the chapel, her head bowed down, and the tears coursing down her dear kind face, as she listened to my voice in some fine music of the Mass. Nothing could exceed

the care which she took of me. I was not allowed to sing in the choir, except on high festival days—at Christmas, Easter, and on some few other occasions.

But my voice had already attracted attention, and when I asked her advice as to my future, the Mother Superior said, "God has given you your beautiful voice, and I think it is clearly your duty to use it. Go out into the world for two years, see what you can do, and if at the end of that time you feel the need of convent life, come back to me, my child, and I will thankfully take you in."

My first appearances in public were when I was eight and twelve years old, and took place in Montreal, and a few smaller towns not very far away, including one at Chambly, my birthplace. I think these performances only amounted in all to about eight or ten in number, and were organised more on friendly and semi-amateur lines than on a wholly public and professional basis. A number of free invitations were given, but those who wished to pay for their seats were gladly allowed to do so. I not only sang, but played the harp and piano, and improvised on both instruments—in fact, I was

desired to show all my friends everything I could do at that time.

The way in which I came to make my first public appearance is somewhat romantic, and is, perhaps, worth recording here. I was practising the piano one day in Mr. Siebold's store in Montreal, when a Scotch balladist named Crawford, who had quite a reputation in the province of Quebec, happened to hear me as he passed by. Turning into the store, he bluntly inquired the name of the player. My father was standing in the store as he entered, and replied, "The player is my daughter," adding as an afterthought, "She can sing a little, too." Crawford appeared interested, and said he would so much like to hear the child's voice, if her father would let her sing to him. After some demur my father sent for me, and asked me to sing to the stranger. I sang, not once, but three or four times, and the stranger expressed his approval. He then stated that he was organising a series of concerts in Montreal, and would very much like me to appear. Again my father demurred, but Crawford persuaded him at last, and it was in this way that I made my first appearance in public, singing, I remember, on

that occasion, "Robert, Robert, toi que j'aime."

When I was about fourteen my family moved to Albany, in the state of New York, and I there succeeded in obtaining the appointment of first soprano at the Roman Catholic Church of St. Joseph, where I, later on, in consequence of the organist's sudden resignation, had to play the organ and teach the choir as well.

During the years that I sang as first soprano at the church I had learnt all Mozart's and Cherubini's Masses, and also Beethoven's great Mass in D, and I am quite sure that to the singing and study of sacred music in those early days I am greatly indebted for whatever success I may since have achieved in oratorio. Often, I know, it is said that the mere act of singing such music when one is very young ought, according to Nature's laws, to injure the voice considerably. But I can state most emphatically that it does nothing of the sort, and this is not only my own opinion, but that of many great singers. On the contrary, if the voice is exercised in the right way it will not be spoiled. It is the *abuse* and not the *use* of the voice in early years, or for that matter at any period, that causes

the deplorable injury which so frequently proves irreparable.

My voice and singing in church eventually attracted so much attention that soon people came from long distances to hear me sing, and I gained many friends, one of the best of them being Bishop Conroy, whom I remember with much affection. He, amongst others, strongly advised me to go to Europe to study, and in order that I should have the best instruction possible, two concerts were organised so that sufficient funds might be raised to enable me to do so.

The Bishop himself left no stone unturned to make the concerts a success, which they undoubtedly were; and at the conclusion of the second one I can well remember my father coming forward on to the platform and announcing to the audience that " after hoping against hope for over six years, his daughter at last found herself in a pecuniary position that would enable her to go to Europe at once, and there complete her musical education under the best professors obtainable "—an announcement that was received with great applause.

A purse was given to me at the church where I had played and sung, besides various presents from friends, and even from some

who had been up to then only acquaintances, as I had thought, but who proved themselves the truest friends. I can never be sufficiently grateful to the good people of Albany for all their kindness and help, both in the way of good advice and in material assistance.

But, with all this, I myself had neither the actual definite idea of, nor the actual ambition for, " success," as success is ordinarily understood.

I remember, in conversation about some local success I had had, saying to a great friend of mine, " I do not know how it is, or what it is, but I feel as if I had something in me which will be compelled to come out some day, which I must do—which it will be my duty to do." She looked at me in surprise—I was only a slight, thin girl in short frocks, and almost a child in appearance —and said, " Yes, I think so, too."

And so, with the unanimous good wishes of all my friends, I left them and my relations and started out, a lonely girl, to try what I could do in the wide world, not even knowing what capacity I had, but full of hope and determination to attain to the highest standard possible in whatever branch of the musical art the future might have in store for me.

CHAPTER II

MY DÉBUT AT MESSINA

I HAD been advised to go to Paris and put myself under the famous tenor Duprez, who was teaching at that time, but shortly after my arrival there I was stricken down with a severe attack of typhoid fever, to which I should probably have succumbed had it not been for the devoted care of my dear old friend Madame la Baronne de Lafitte, and my clever doctor.

During my stay in Paris I lived entirely with Madame de Lafitte, to whom I had had a letter of introduction from the nuns of my old convent. She was a dear old lady who took a great fancy to me, and showed me the greatest kindness, for which I owe her, and several members of her family, most sincere gratitude. I am also much indebted to her for the insight she gave me into what a singer's life should be.

Both she and her brother, M. Pacini, were

passionately fond of music, and were in the habit of inviting to their house all the leading musicians of the day. Thus I became acquainted in a comparatively short time with a large circle of musical, literary, and artistic men and women all well known in their day, and the musical atmosphere thus created proved indirectly of considerable benefit to me by enabling me to exchange ideas with many musicians of great ability.

It was here one day that Prince Poniatowski, a pupil of Rossini, came to call, bringing with him M. Maurice Strackosch, perhaps the best-known impresario of that period. They came—though I was not aware of it at the time—for the express purpose of hearing me sing. Had I known in advance the reason of their visit I should probably have been dreadfully nervous, and so most likely have failed to do myself justice. As it was, I believe I sang quite well, and they told me my voice pleased them greatly, which delighted me so much that I could hardly get any sleep that night for thinking of it.

Madame de Lafitte had been twice married, her first husband having been the highly celebrated tenor, Martin—so celebrated, indeed, that in Paris certain operatic parts

were spoken of for years as "rôles Martin." Madame de Lafitte told me of the care he used to take of himself, not only when he had to sing, but at all times : how he refrained from going too much into society ; how when he was singing at night he never talked during the day, kept the house well ventilated with fresh air, and dined early in the afternoon ; and she impressed upon me the necessity of following these rules if I wished to be in good voice when I sang, and to keep my voice for a long time. M. Martin preserved his voice to an extraordinary degree until almost the day of his death at the age of seventy-five.

Through the kindness of Madame de Lafitte and of a near relation of hers, Madame Carette, who was then about the Empress Eugénie, I was invited to one of the last Imperial balls ever given at the Tuileries, and I can vividly recall the splendour of the scene and the extreme beauty of the Empress. Too late to postpone the ball had come the intelligence of a Royal death, which placed the Imperial Court in mourning. The then celebrated Worth had prepared a magnificent dress for the Empress for this occasion, about which Paris had been talking as a *chef d'œuvre*, but as it was in colours she could

not, of course, wear it under the circumstances. I shall never forget the Empress as she came in dressed in pure white, with pearls and diamonds, and looking the true Queen of Beauty she actually was at that time.

It was the first occasion on which I had seen her, just before the Franco-Prussian War, and little did I dream how I should next see her—a sorrowful, broken-hearted widow and mother, and an exile, but still displaying that patient dignity which at once recalled the lines Shakespeare has put into the mouth of another Queen—

> Here I and sorrow sit,
> Let Kings come bow to me.

I remained in Paris for six months studying singing and acting, during which time M. Duprez took the greatest pains with me, showing me every kindness and appreciation. He was a master of his art and was especially great in declamation, as "declamation" was practised at that time. Now it too often degenerates into a mere forcing of the voice, but with Duprez every note was sung with the full resonance of its tone, every syllable of the words was pronounced with the distinct and exact value of its meaning, and to his

first instruction I attribute the facility given me for singing recitatives.

He had a small theatre in Paris where, after a few months of teaching, his pupils used to perform; old pupils, students, professors, and sometimes critics being present at these trials. My first essay was in the garden scene of Gounod's "Faust." I was greatly applauded, and during the applause M. Duprez was overheard to say, in reply to a question about me, "Oui, elle a une belle voix et le feu sacré, elle est du bois dont on fait les grandes flûtes." On my return to Paris after my début in Italy, M. Duprez came to hear me at the Salle Ventadour (then the Théâtre Italien), and was so pleased with the pupil whose career he had himself begun that he kindly sent me his photograph signed "Duprez à Albani"—a great compliment, I thought.

After my first lessons from M. Duprez, I went to Milan, following the advice of Prince Poniatowski (a great amateur of music whom I had met in the way already recorded), who strenuously recommended my taking lessons from the Maestro Lamperti, the then celebrated Italian singing teacher.

Let me say here that Lamperti was, in

SIGNOR LAMPERTI.

my opinion, by far the best singing master in the world at that time, both for voice production and for the true Italian method—a method which is now unfortunately becoming extinct. The maestro used to say, "Learn this method thoroughly, and you will be able to sing every kind of music." I did learn it thoroughly, and to prove the truth of Lamperti's words, when the great pianist von Bulow, the friend of Wagner and Liszt, heard me in "Lohengrin" at Covent Garden, he said, "If Mademoiselle Albani ever goes to Germany, she will show the Germans that Wagner can be *sung*!"

I am proud to say that Lamperti had a very high opinion of me and of what I could do, and often said that I was his best pupil. One day Prince Poniatowski, who was then in Milan, came to the studio and, amongst others, heard me sing. He said to the maestro, "But her shake is not correct." "Ah!" replied Lamperti, "that will be all right. She is like a bottle of soda-water; I have only to draw the cork, and out it all comes." His kindness and encouragement, and the interest he showed in me, could not be surpassed; though at the same time, and justly so, he never relaxed for a moment the strict

rule of his teaching, while showing me also what he thought of me. Lamperti never passed over a fault—he exacted the most minute study from all his pupils, in breathing, in producing the voice, in shades of tone, in phrasing, and in all the minutiæ which go to make a great singer. He was a severe critic and master, and though he thought nothing of taking any amount of care and trouble with those pupils who studied conscientiously and thoroughly, he had no patience whatever with those who lazily left half his instructions unheeded, or with those amateurs who, from time to time, wished to join his classes, and on the strength of their rank or wealthy position thought they could play at singing and still succeed. He would say of such an one, with a shrug of his shoulders, " Sì, canterà da contessa " (" Yes, she will only sing like a countess ").

I remained for several months studying with Lamperti, but then my slender stock of money became practically exhausted, and it was necessary for me to obtain an engagement to replenish my purse.

In those days operatic managers came to the studio to hear Lamperti's pupils with a view to engaging any they might consider

good, and I had had several offers from various theatres. I consulted the maestro as to which I should accept, and he chose for me Messina, in Sicily, saying that as the public there was a most difficult one, if I made a success, it would be a real success. He also made the condition that I should make my début in "La Sonnambula." This was the opera on which I had principally based my studies. Lamperti used to say, "Once you can sing the 'Sonnambula' properly, you can sing any other opera."

It is rather a curious coincidence that I should have made my first début in an opera of Bellini's, seeing that his birthday and mine are on the same day—November 1.

I left Milan for Messina, feeling I had now reached the turning-point of my career. My great maestro's good opinion and kind encouragement notwithstanding, I naturally started on my journey with an anxious heart; but I had constantly before me the high standard of art towards which I unceasingly strove to rise—an ideal which in the beginning, and indeed ever since, helped me so greatly to overcome the uncertainties and anxieties inseparable from an artistic life.

But my doubts and fears were happily

soon assuaged, if not set at rest, for at the orchestral rehearsal, when I had finished my first aria, the conductor stopped the band and said to me, "My child, your success is assured, and it will be very great." I am thankful to say his prophecy proved a true one, for at the performance the public was most enthusiastic and at the close of the opera called me before the curtain fifteen times.

The *Gazetta di Messina* scarcely exaggerated the truth when it said that the public had been "so surprised and so fascinated that at one time the theatre seemed converted into a cage of mad people, such were the cries, the clapping of hands, the recalls with which Mademoiselle Albani appeared struck dumb; and she burst into tears of an emotion which must have tried her more than the execution of the whole opera." The *Aquila Latina* was also as kind and complimentary to me.

From my début in Messina in 1870 dates the beginning of my public career, and here I may say a word about my stage name, "Albani." It has generally been supposed that I adopted the name on account of my connection with the city of Albany, in America, but this is not so. When I was about to

MADAME ALBANI AT THE TIME OF HER DÉBUT AT MESSINA.

sign my first engagement, my Italian elocution master, Signor Delorenzi, said that my real name, "Lajeunesse," was not a good one for the stage, and that I ought to adopt another. He promised to find me a good one, and the next day came and suggested "Albani," telling me that it was the name of an old Italian family whose members, with the exception of a very old Cardinal, were all dead. I said, "But did you know that I have lived in Albany?" "No," he replied, "I never heard that"; and this is the true origin of the name under which I have sung ever since.

It was with a glow of heartfelt pleasure that this curious coincidence of the two names struck me. It made me feel that the kind thoughts and good wishes of my dear Albany friends must have followed me even here, and I joyfully chose the name of "Albani," feeling that, to me, it must be one of good omen.

I sang for the whole season at Messina, the kind and warm appreciation of my audiences bringing me greater confidence in my own capacity, and strengthening new hopes for the future, so that I began to realise the power that one day might come to me.

Amongst one or two incidents which happened during my stay at Messina one especially impressed itself on my memory. One day a messenger came to my door and left an enormous parcel, which on examination proved to contain a large quantity of valuable jewellery—bracelets, brooches, rings, etc.—besides shawls in black and white, and some priceless lace. There was a visiting-card inside, the name on which was quite unknown to me. I made inquiries, and learnt that the sender of these articles was a gentleman who had been out of his mind, but had since recovered. The excitement caused by being present at the opera at my performances had had the unfortunate effect of again upsetting his equilibrium, and he had taken all his wife's trinkets and many valuables and sent them to me as an expression of his admiration. Through a banker my companion and I ascertained his address, and, needless to say, at once returned the parcel. Afterwards we learnt that the poor gentleman had been sent back to a nursing home for lunatics.

I recall one other incident which pleased me greatly. One evening an old gentleman asked to be presented to me on the stage;

he was close on ninety years of age, and quite blind. He had been a prisoner for political reasons, and had lost his sight from his sufferings during his imprisonment. He possessed the love and respect of every one in Messina. In the country he had a property which was celebrated for growing the finest Mandarin oranges in Sicily. He admired my singing very greatly; he always came to hear me, and would bring me, tied up in a silk handkerchief, some of his "Oranci de Paradiso," as he called them. He told me, in his complimentary way, that he had never heard the "Sonnambula" sung as I sang it, since hearing Persiani.

One evening at the opera before I left he asked permission, in the presence of many who were there also, to pass his hands over my face, so that he could form an idea in his own mind, as he could not see, as to what I was like. I remember how anxious he was to hear the "Puritani" of Bellini, an opera I did not know at that time, for I had never studied it, and little thought then that it would become one of my favourite operas, and "Qui la voce" one of my favourite songs.

I hope I may be pardoned for adding here some extracts from the *Sicilian Courier*

written by that brilliant Florentine writer Signor Bertolami.

"CATANIA, *May* 15.—Yesterday afternoon I took the railroad to Aci Reale, to hear again the singing of Emma Albani on the occasion of her benefit. Who this Albani is, is a question often asked to-day, but one that will not need to be asked in Italy in future years. She has at a young age made her début in Messina, and has come from Messina to Aci Reale to open the Bellini Theatre.

"Emma Albani is a privileged creature, in whom both the lady and the artist stand at the same eminence, in whom are in unison the actress and the singer; nor can one say whether she is most remarkable in splendour of genius or power of thought, acuteness of ideas or faithfulness of execution, fullness of melody or taste in the variations.

"The voice of Albani is not made to satisfy those listeners who, as Carlo Botta says, 'are all ear,' but to fill all hearts which, in the sphere of art, know how to find consolation for all earthly miseries. . . . Albani, in short, is such an artist as inspires respect, mingled with affection, enthusiasm together with reverence. She converts to the religion

of art, I shall not say, those who pretend to honour and refinement beyond the mass of mankind, but the veriest sunburnt Cyclops of the day.

"Fancy the 'Sonnambula,' that superhuman and inimitable idyll, with this young creature in it from beyond the Atlantic, and yet with such a vast perception of Italian art! . . .

"The Catanians, charmed with her singing in Aci Reale, have shown such avidity to have her in the season from October to May, that they offered to pay the penalty of the violation of the lady's agreement for the theatre at Malta, besides increasing her emoluments. It seems that the manager of Malta, on the first news of this, came suddenly to Aci Reale, and encouraged himself by finding that a high sense of honour had prevented the lady from accepting this flattering offer."

While in Messina a municipal deputation came and invited me to open the then new opera house, to be called the Teatro Bellini, at his birthplace, Aci Reale—a request to which I joyfully acceded.

At that time there were no hotels in the town worthy of the name, and on my arrival I found that, through the kindness of the

inhabitants, an apartment had been prepared for me and my companion in a fine old palace, in which the owners had not lived for a long time. Furniture therefore had been supplied, decorations added, and I had a bedroom with six windows in it, three looking on Etna, and three over the sea—two of the most enchanting views imaginable. And comfort reigned inside also, for my room was large and airy enough for a hospital ward, and completely furnished, while the principal people of Aci Reale supplied all my wants. One family sent me wine, another masses of fruit, even meat and poultry, and then came an enormous tray of cakes and sweets from one of the convents ; in fact, there was enough every morning to feed a regiment, and a very great deal more than was advisable for a prima donna to eat.

I sang in the " Sonnambula," and to such crammed houses that I was not asked to sing any other opera, for the Sicilians' love for Bellini and his music was deep and true, and they found my interpretation of his lovely melodies so exactly in accord with their own appreciation, that their enthusiasm increased night after night.

At my benefit I was literally loaded with

flowers, presents, and poetry, the detached sheets of which were sent fluttering down in every direction on the heads of the audience; and among the numberless bouquets of every shape was a basket in which was concealed a live dove. They had painted it red, and the dear little bird rose and flew all over the theatre.

My heartfelt pleasure was only equalled by my great surprise, for I had no agent who acted for me; my companion and myself had simply travelled there so that I should fulfil my engagement, and, kind as every one had been to me, I never dreamed of such a spontaneous demonstration taking place. Not only had the inhabitants of Aci Reale crowded to the opera, but people had come from Syracuse, Catania, Palermo, and indeed from all parts of the island.

After all this kindness and enthusiasm on the part of the warm-hearted Sicilians, I was very sorry to leave Sicily, its people, its beautiful climate, its wealth of flowers and fruit, and its blue sky and sunshine.

The climate of Sicily and Italy was quite different to anything I had experienced before, and I found it very delightful. There was something, however, that I appreciated even

more than the climate, and that was the numberless works of art, in which the latter country especially is very rich.

In Italy one comes across fine pictures and statuary, old churches and palaces, to say nothing of the almost unique Greek and Roman remains, and all kinds of things artistic wherever one goes.

I have always maintained that an artist, whether a singer or a painter, should seize every opportunity of seeing and studying works of art, and should, in fact, live in an atmosphere of art. I am certain that it enlarges the mind and ideas, and that each class of art will help the others.

I had always loved beautiful and artistic things, though before leaving America I had had very little chance of seeing any. But when in Milan and Sicily, and especially in Florence, where I went after leaving Sicily, I spent a great deal of my spare time in visiting picture-galleries and museums, which not only delighted me, but which I was able to turn to good account. I took ideas from one picture, for instance, for a detail of costume that was puzzling me; and in cases where the opera was historical, or taken from a well-known poem or story, I searched

for pictures or statues of the character I was studying, and for books on the subject, so that I might get a hint for some action or gesture, and a more complete realisation of my part.

There is nothing more suggestive to an actress or a singer than the reading of other minds on the rôle which is being thought out at the moment. When about to sing a new part, and consequently to have new costumes, I have found great help from pictures in the National Gallery and engravings at the South Kensington Museum. Thus an artist of two or three centuries ago is able to help an artiste of to-day.

CHAPTER III

AFTER MY DÉBUT

From Sicily I returned to Milan to go through some more study with Lamperti. I had been obliged from force of circumstances to leave him rather prematurely, so I considered it would be better for me to take advantage of a little spare time that I had to improve myself by further lessons, and by learning new parts with him. This I also did upon one or two subsequent occasions.

My next engagement was at Cento, where I went for a short season. Here I sang in Verdi's "Rigoletto" for the first time; and on that evening "Caro nome," the duet, and the quartette were all unanimously encored, and the scene was, to me, one of undreamed-of enthusiasm.

For my benefit night part of "Rigoletto" was chosen as well as the last act of "La Sonnambula." This was a somewhat anxious programme for so young a débutante, but

it was made more so by unforeseen circumstances.

Several enthusiastic *abonnés* had sent me that afternoon an enormous flat circular bouquet which must have measured quite six feet in diameter and was composed entirely of tuberoses and violets. Its magnificent appearance was only equalled by the power of its scent, the result being that I was seized with a violent headache. I went to the theatre and began my part, but before I reached the end of "Caro nome" the tears were streaming down my face from sheer agony, and they had to let the curtain down and take me to my dressing-room. The audience was told that I hoped to resume later in the evening; and as the performance was a *spectacle coupé*, it was proceeded with by an act of another opera. They sent for a doctor, who pronounced that I had been poisoned by the over-powerful scent of the flowers. He gave me a strong dose of ether, under which I was unconscious for nearly half an hour. When I came round, the pain was gone, and I managed somehow to finish the opera.

Ever since that time, however, I have been obliged to be very careful, and I have

never been able to wear strongly scented flowers, or to have too many at a time in my rooms.

I remember so well the mass of flowers given me on my benefit night at Cento. The bouquets came mostly from Bologna, not very far off; some were quite flat, made somewhat in the shape of tables, and were so large that they were brought to the theatre on the backs of donkeys.

As I have mentioned my "benefit" two or three times, I should explain that in Italy in those days it was the custom to engage the principal artistes at a very low salary, and to give them a night at the end of the season, assuring them a fairly good sum from the receipts.

This occasion was always taken advantage of by the artiste's friends and admirers (if he or she had any) to bring presents of flowers or jewellery. I have often laughed at seeing a favourite tenor on his benefit night come off the stage with two or three enormous evergreen wreaths hung round his neck.

My salary for my first engagement, that in Messina, was only 500 frs., or £20 per month, and upon this my companion and I

MADAME ALBANI
(A portrait taken at Florence.)

had to live. It can be easily understood, therefore, that a benefit, and a good benefit, was very necessary.

After Cento I was engaged for several representations at Florence, at the Politeana Theatre. The Maestro Lamperti had written a message to the Florentines saying that he was "sending them the most accomplished musician and finished singer in style that had ever left his studio," so that no wonder my début in Florence was made to a crowded audience.

This theatre was very large, and, as regards the auditorium, an open-air one. The stage was roofed in, but the rest of the building was open to the starry sky and a good share of the winds of heaven. On one of the nights that I sang it rained heavily, and all the audience, or at least those in the stalls and pit, were sitting under umbrellas. Even this did not seem to check their enthusiasm or damp their ardour. They sat on in spite of the wet, and I even had to repeat one or two of my pieces. I got a little of the rain myself, but, owing to the state of excitement I was in, only found it out when everything was over.

The Sicilians had sympathised so warmly

with my interpretation of " Amina " that they had called me " the daughter of Bellini," but the Florentines said I was " La Sonnambula " herself !

It was here, during this engagement, that I made the acquaintance of one of the greatest singers of the last century—I refer to Madame Jenny Lind. This acquaintance was renewed later on when I was living in London, and, I am happy to say, continued up to the time of her death. Madame Lind had retired long before I came upon the scene, and I therefore never heard her sing, for which I have always felt sincere regret.

I had several most interesting conversations with her on art generally, and on the art of singing in particular. Her ideas were so noble and so elevated, and they appealed to me so warmly, that I can never forget her words ; and it is her own copy of " Der Freischütz " that I always take with me whenever I sing " Softly sighs." It was given to me by her husband after she died.

From Florence I went to Malta, where I was engaged for the whole winter season, which was one of five months' duration. As there were a considerable number of troops in Malta and ships in the harbour, there

were always very many Army and Navy officers, besides the Maltese, among my audiences. At that time local amusements were not too plentiful, so the opera was very popular. I sang a great number of times during the season, which entailed a considerable amount of hard work, but the public were so good to me that I felt amply repaid.

The part of Inez in Meyerbeer's "L'Africaine" I studied, learnt, and sang in only *two* days, having at a moment's notice to replace another artiste, at the request of the management, thus proving, as I have said, the value of being a musician.

I sang in "La Sonnambula," "Lucia di Lammermoor," "Roberto il Diavolo" (Isabella), and "Il Barbiere di Siviglia." In this last opera I began by singing, in the music-lesson scene, the "Carnaval de Vénise," but my English soldier and sailor *abonnés* one night clamoured for "Home, Sweet Home," so I added that. It created such a furore, and these veritable exiles from home were so touched, that I was obliged to sing it every night, and often to encore it, sometimes being compelled to add "The Last Rose of Summer" and "Robin Adair." Perhaps it

was fortunate that " Il Barbiere " is a short opera—for my " music lessons " were apt to become longer every night !

I made many friends in Malta, amongst them being General Sir Patrick Grant (then Governor of Malta) and Lady Grant, Sir Cooper Key (the Admiral commanding on the Mediterranean station) and Lady Key, Colonel (afterwards General) McCrea—who all remained fast and true friends of mine to the time of their deaths, and many members of their families are amongst my dearest friends still.

I made many other friends and acquaintances also, and sometimes even now it happens that a gentleman will come up to me with the words, " Don't you remember me in Malta ? " Occasionally I feel as if I must have known in those days half the British Army and nearly all the British Navy !

The end of the season came, and with it my benefit, which realised for me what was in those days a fairly large sum. I was the grateful recipient of innumerable gifts of flowers, of poetry, and, last though not least, of a purse containing a sum of money which enabled me to go to London, and try my fortune in the most considerable city in the world.

My friends, especially General McCrea, had constantly urged me to do this, so much so that at last I yielded; but I am sure now that had I fully realised the importance of a London opera house, and of the number of great artistes then singing there, I should have hesitated longer before consenting.

When I left Malta, a very pretty and flattering compliment was paid to me, the men-of-war's boats forming a double line down the harbour through which my steamer had to pass.

Before I sailed, however, I had had a request from the Mayor of Aci Reale, in Sicily, to return there and sing at a great charity performance for the benefit of the poor of the town. I consented gladly to do this on my way to England, and I landed at Syracuse. At Catania I was received by the Mayor and Corporation and the principal notabilities of Aci Reale; a large luncheon was given, and speeches made expressing the sincere gratitude universally felt towards me —a gratitude that was more than equalled by the happiness this opportunity gave me of returning in ever so small a degree the kindness and enthusiasm which had been showered on me during my first visit.

The luncheon over, we all started by special train to Aci Reale, and found the town was again *en fête*. Immense crowds of people came to the station, and I was conducted in a long procession, with loud shouts of "Evviva!" The same suite of rooms which I had occupied before was allotted me, and my every want had been forestalled. At my first dinner a dish was served which I was told was "Il figlio della colomba rossa" ("The son of the red dove") given me amongst the flowers on my benefit night during my first visit. It struck me this was more a case of kindness to me than to the dove!

The rehearsal was fixed for the next day of "Lucia di Lammermoor," for I was to sing in this opera here for the first time.

The excitement had become so great that the people made every endeavour to be allowed to hear the rehearsal. This, of course, could not be permitted; but in the end the direction and the artistes had to submit, for the crowds outside actually broke down the doors and filled the theatre from floor to ceiling, the rehearsal being thus converted into an actual performance.

On the next night not even standing room was left, and a very considerable sum of

money was realised and handed over to the responsible authorities for the benefit of the poor. The warmth of my welcome and the applause I received almost overwhelmed me. I left Aci Reale the following day amidst a scene of amazing enthusiasm. The shops were shut, the day was made a general holiday, the Mayor and Corporation, many of the *abonnés* of the opera, and over five thousand people came to the station, the cheering being tremendous.

Some acquaintances I made some years afterwards in Paris told me they arrived from Palermo just as I was leaving, and they could not imagine what extraordinary event was happening. They thought that Royalty, at least, must be there; but on inquiring they were told "Ma é l'Albani, é l'Albani" ("It is Albani"), as if that name accounted for everything. I mention this to show to what lengths an enthusiastic musical audience will go in Sicily!

I arrived in London in June 1871. Mr. James Mapleson, the manager of the Italian Opera at Her Majesty's Theatre, had heard of my success in Sicily and Malta and had been asked to hear me sing. To my keen disappointment, Mr. Mapleson could not, or

would not, do so. Mlle. Marimon had just before this made a success in Paris, and Mr. Mapleson had engaged her for his theatre, and did not want, as he said, any more prime donne. I, in fact, did not even see Mr. Mapleson, and met him for the first time several years later.

After this repulse I—most fortunately for myself, as it turned out—had a communication, through General McCrea, from Mr. Frederick Gye, the impresario of the Royal Italian Opera, Covent Garden. He received me most kindly, heard me sing, and gave me an engagement for five summer seasons.

As this was in June, and there was still over a month of the opera season to run, I was very anxious to begin my engagement at once; but Mr. Gye told me that he could not arrange for me to make my début until the next year. He promised, however, to give me the "Sonnambula" at the beginning of the next season, and with this I had to be content.

I sang under the management of Mr. Frederick Gye from my first year in London until the time of his death in 1878—seven seasons in all. Mr. Gye was a thorough business man, very kind and thoughtful, but

MR. FREDERICK GYE.

always managing his theatre in a splendid fashion, whilst insisting upon everybody doing their duty. It was a real pleasure to be directed by him. He used to say that an operatic manager needed to be a greater diplomatist than the Prime Minister; and I am sure he was right.

He never would let me sing two days in succession, nor rehearse on the day that I had a performance at night. I have followed this rule ever since, and have found it very much to my comfort and advantage.

Mr. Gye was the manager of Covent Garden Theatre at the time it was burnt down in 1856. By great energy and perseverance he got the money together to rebuild it, and the present theatre was finished and opened in May 1858.

I remained for a short time in London, where I made some kind friends, and saw as many of the wonderful collections and "sights" of London as I could. But above all, I went to the opera, where I had the privilege of hearing for the first time Madame Adelina Patti, Madame Pauline Lucca, Madame Miolan Carvallo, M. Faure, and other great artistes of world-wide reputation, who were then all singing at Covent Garden every season.

Naturally in Italy, where riches do not abound as in London, I had been associated with artistes who were either beginners or whose talents or voices had not enabled them to rise to the first rank; but here I found opera given with such a combination of the highest artistic talent as probably had never existed before, and, I fear, may never exist again. The orchestra was the finest in Europe, and the chorus and "ensemble" generally far beyond anything I had ever known.

Madame Patti was then at the zenith of her fame. To listen to her lovely voice, soft as velvet, equal throughout in register, flexible, true, and seeming to pour from her throat with the ease and facility of the voice of a bird, was an immense pleasure to me. Her acting, too, was very fascinating, especially when she played Rosina in Rossini's "Barbiere di Siviglia." This is, perhaps, one of the purest and most complete comedy parts ever written, but Madame Patti never seemed to me to *act* Rosina—she was the part itself.

Madame Lucca also interested me greatly. Her "Africaine" was a study in feeling, in expression, in singing, and especially in acting. She was *great* in the "Africaine," and she

AUTOGRAPH OF MADAME PAULINE LUCCA.

was great also in the absolute comedy part of Zerlina in " Fra Diavolo." Her Cherubino, I consider, has never been approached.

I shall never forget the first time I heard Madame Miolan Carvallo. It was in Gounod's " Faust," and she had hurriedly replaced Madame Lucca, who had been taken ill. In the Jewel Song her grace, her phrasing, her rhythm, the perfection and beauty of her art, touched me so deeply that, as she finished the last note, I involuntarily burst into tears.

Towards the end of this season I left London for Italy to continue my studies with the Maestro Lamperti, who was then on Lake Como. It was his custom to leave Milan during the hot weather and spend the summer and autumn on one of the Italian lakes. This did not necessarily entail a cessation of his lessons, as several of the more anxious and industrious of his pupils always followed him, and the days were most agreeably as well as profitably spent, half in work and half in relaxation and the enjoyment of Como's exquisite climate and scenery.

To the many who know it description is superfluous ; but to me, who saw it for the first time, it seemed almost a paradise, at

once of grandeur and of beauty. Its mountains are so magnificent, its waters so blue, its vegetation and flowers so luxuriant, that the music of our studies was sung again by Nature to our souls; we felt refreshed both mentally and physically.

While at Como I studied with Lamperti "Mignon," by Ambroise Thomas, and the "Conte Ory" of Rossini, as I had just been engaged at the Pergola Theatre in Florence, where I was to sing in both these operas. "Mignon" was then a new opera; Lamperti had never seen it on the stage, and although, of course, he taught it to me perfectly, I was still anxious to ascertain the ideas and wishes of the composer himself, if possible. The maestro entirely approved of this, and with his hearty sanction I wrote to the publisher of "Mignon," M. Heugel, asking him, if I came to Paris, whether it would be possible for him to arrange an interview for me with M. Ambroise Thomas. M. Heugel was quite a stranger to me, but he wrote back most kindly, telling me to come to Paris, and that M. Thomas would gladly see me and tell me all I wanted to know. M. Ambroise Thomas was at that time Director of the Conservatoire de Musique in Paris, and it

was arranged by M. Heugel that the *maître de scène* who had put the opera on the stage at the Opera Comique should meet me also.

This meeting duly took place, and I learnt from M. Thomas and from the *maître de scène* all that they could tell me of the singing and the action of "Mignon," M. Thomas especially taking the kindest interest and trouble in the several interviews he granted me. He even went so far as to sing my part himself, giving me every detail of his own ideas about the rôle. It was he who suggested to me the sobbing and laughing in one of the recitatives.

It is to him also I owe a proper understanding of the great importance of clear enunciation of the recitatives and of the words generally. Up to that time my first anxiety had been for my singing, my breathing, shades of tone, and production of voice; the words hitherto had been a secondary consideration.

Ever since then I have adopted this plan of going through a new work with its composer whenever it has been possible, for by so doing an insight is obtained into more of the capabilities and possibilities of the music than can be gained in any other way.

When I was about to sing in the "Redemption" and "Mors et Vita," I went to Paris and studied both works with M. Gounod, the greatest French composer living at that time. On the beauties of these oratorios I need not dwell here, as they are so well known; but my rendering of them was essentially enlarged by having the interpretation of his music explained to me by M. Gounod and by the extreme charm with which he played it. I felt deeply indebted to him for his kindness and instruction—an indebtedness often renewed in later years—as well as for the true friendship he then showed me, and which lasted until his death.

When I was learning Wagner's "Lohengrin" and "Tannhäuser," I went to Dresden and Munich, and studied them with Herr Wülner, the celebrated *chef d'orchestre* and friend of Wagner, who had all the traditions of the music from Wagner himself. I also went to hear the operas given by the Germans in Germany, so as to acquire a knowledge of all the best methods and traditions known and practised in Wagner's own country. There is nothing which enables an artiste to feel and to understand the actual reality of a rôle so well, both in the music and the

acting, as living so far as possible in its artistic atmosphere while studying it.

After two weeks of real study of " Mignon " with M. Ambroise Thomas in Paris I went to Florence and made my début in the " Sonnambula," singing also in " Lucia " and the " Conte Ory." The costume I wore in the last-named opera was designed by the famous French painter M. Cabanel, whose acquaintance I made here. He had come to Florence on the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War, and he remained there during that winter.

At last, towards the end of the season—and, for me, dangerously close to the time when I must depart and fulfil my engagement at Covent Garden—" Mignon " was ready to be produced.

It had been rather a failure in another town in Italy, but at the Pergola it created such a furore that four or five pieces were encored at each performance. I had even to repeat recitatives, of which there were several, and the house was crammed every night. It was on this occasion that I came fully to realise that an opera could be acted as thoroughly as it could be sung. Mignon, with all her simplicity, is a great acting part, and the teaching and advice of

the composer and of the *maître de scène* in Paris stood me in good stead.

So great was the success of "Mignon" that the manager telegraphed to Mr. Gye in London begging him to allow me to stay longer, so that more nights of this opera might be given. This was, however, not possible, as the London season was just beginning and I was wanted immediately. But I did all I could for the Direction of the Pergola, and actually sang in nine performances of "Mignon" in ten days!

CHAPTER IV

MY FIRST APPEARANCE AT COVENT GARDEN

It was with very mingled feelings that I arrived in London. The change was a great one, both in the matter of climate, which I found so different to those of Italy and Malta, and the "personnel" of such a great opera house as Covent Garden then was.

I had hitherto sung only in Italian theatres, where very few of the artistes or employés were permanently engaged. Here I found myself in a solidly established opera house, the staff of which (the heads of it certainly) was a permanent one. The whole was worked with the quiet discipline of a regiment. The greatest artistes of the day, who were always engaged, returned year after year, and became established in the affections of the British public. I use the word "affection" advisedly, for the English people take those who serve them well to their hearts, and never forget, even after long years, any who once have

won their admiration and, above all, their esteem.

Small wonder if I felt nervous on my arrival; but I was much encouraged by Mr. Gye, who, though almost a stranger then, was kindness itself to me. His faith in my powers encouraged me greatly—a faith that he expressed in a tangible form when, before my début, he offered me an engagement for the whole year.

I discovered that one important reason Mr. Gye had had for not letting me sing at the end of the season of 1871, when I first came to London and was engaged by him, was that he wished to give me every chance of making a successful début, and thought that this could be better done at the beginning of a new season than at the end of an old one. He was certainly right, although at the time I was much disappointed at having to leave London without giving even one representation.

My first appearance at Covent Garden was heralded by no preliminary puffing or extravagant notices, for Mr. Gye, the first and cleverest of operatic managers of that day, would never countenance that form of preliminary advertisement which has since

become so much the custom. He quoted the old proverb, I remember, that "Good wine needs no bush," and said that to raise the expectations of the public too high must always be a great mistake. If I made a success, it would then come as a surprise and be all the greater.

All that appeared beforehand about me was the following simple announcement: "Mlle. Albani, the remarkable young soprano, will appear in Italian opera at Covent Garden under the management of Mr. Frederick Gye."

An officious friend twitted Mr. Gye with not having done more for me in advance, but he only answered, "They will come, they will listen, and they will come again."

When in Florence the previous winter my engagement in London was much discussed, and the Italians said that the English would probably like me, but that they were not sufficiently musical entirely to appreciate my singing. I know now how utterly wrong they were. I can truthfully say, with pride and gratitude, that I have been fortunate and happy enough to make numberless friends and—may I add?—many most appreciative admirers. The English public has been, and

is, faithful and true to me ever since. As I have said before, in England you are never forgotten.

The Italians being wrong and Mr. Gye quite right, I made my début in " La Sonnambula " at Covent Garden on April 2, 1872, with the most gratifying results—results which surpassed all my fondest hopes, and gave rise to criticisms so flattering that it would ill become me to repeat them here.

I may, however, perhaps be allowed to quote a paragraph which appeared in the *Musical Times* for May 1872, as being fairly typical of the very kind reception accorded me by the critics :

" The great event of the month has been the success of Mlle. Albani, who made her début as Amina in ' La Sonnambula.' With a genuine soprano voice, a facile and unexaggerated execution, and a remarkable power of *sostenuto* in the higher part of her register, this young vocalist at once secured the good opinion of her audience, and gradually advanced her position throughout the opera until the final ' Ah non giunge,' her brilliant rendering of which produced a storm of applause which could only be appeased by her appearing three times before the curtain.

As the heroine in 'Lucia di Lammermoor, Mlle. Albani again asserted her right to the highest place as a lyric artist ; and there can be no doubt that future performances will fully justify the verdict so unanimously and unmistakably pronounced upon her first appearance."

But some of the critics were a little more cautious. One London newspaper of repute said :

"The position of the Canadian Songstress has yet to be determined ; her most ardent admirers rely on her future. *Qui vivra, verra.*"

The tenor who sang with me at my début was Signor Nicolini. How well I remember him ! He had a fine, powerful voice, which he used with much skill, and he possessed great dramatic ability. In later years I sang with him "Lohengrin," "Les Huguenots," and other operas.

During this season I sang in "Lucia di Lammermoor," as Lady Enrichetta in Flotow's "Marta," and in "Linda di Chamounix," but with so many other prime donne in the theatre it was, of course, difficult to find at once fresh rôles for a young débutante.

I sang also at some private concerts, amongst others at the house of the late Lord Dudley.

Lord Dudley was a great lover of music and patron of art, and a constant visitor to the opera. He was good enough to admire my voice and singing, and to feel interested in my youthful career; and he continued his kindness to me during the rest of his life.

At his house I met the late Queen of Holland. I remember her as a very amiable and kind-hearted old lady; she complimented me and was most kind in expressing the pleasure my singing gave her. I remember also being much struck by her wonderful "coiffure," which consisted of a mass of grey curls, arranged quite unlike the fashion of that day.

I was presented to many celebrated persons, both in society and in the musical and artistic world, during that season. Many of their names, however, I regret to say I cannot remember at this distance of time, but it was then I first met Sir Julius Benedict, who arranged for, and accompanied me at, most of my private concerts. He gave me much good advice on the subject of music generally, and was the first to enlighten me on the traditions of oratorio music, which is understood nowhere else as it is in England.

From an English accompanist, Mr. Josiah Pitman, the organist at Covent Garden, I

learnt also nearly all the traditions of oratorio. He had known for years past (and accompanied them) all the great oratorio singers, and could tell me how they sang each phrase. Through him I am indebted to the celebrated Madame Clara Novello, though I never heard myself, for some most valuable instruction, her especially on the necessity of the clearest enunciation and correct weight and meaning being given to every word, as well as to every phrase, in oratorio singing.

Whilst singing oratorio, I have often been told that I recalled Clara Novello, and I should like to quote here an account of her singing which I happened to come across lately, and which, to my mind, describes exactly what an oratorio singer should strive to be.

" Clara Novello was a great oratorio singer, and a great favourite with the English public. The singing of oratorio is the highest perfection of all, and few are granted the specialised gifts needed to exercise it in perfection. For one really great woman oratorio singer we generally count two or three eminent operatic prima donnas. Oratorio supplies no fictitious aids of scenery, impersonation, or story to bring the audience

into sympathy with the singer. It is just music in its purest, boldest form, and the artiste who can stand up with 500 stringed instruments behind her and thousands of calm critical listeners before, and sing 'Lift thine eyes' or 'O, rest in the Lord' so as to lift every soul there into the Courts of Heaven, must have, as one would think, learnt her art among the angels before bringing it down to earth. A voice such as is heard perhaps once or twice in a century, temperament balanced to equal riches and simplicity, these are the conditions necessary for the greatest singers, and for the oratorio singer one more grace is needed—a living faith in the immortal messages to which her voice must lend its wings."

I might mention incidentally, while on the subject of oratorio, that Dvořák's "Stabat Mater" was composed for me, and I sang it at Cambridge when the degree of Mus. Bac. was conferred on Dvořák. He told me that whilst writing "Stabat Mater" he could hear my voice when walking in the woods about his native village in Hungary.

As a result of my first season in London I was engaged as one of the leading soprani at the Norwich Musical Festival in the follow-

ing October, and this was the beginning of my connection with the great English festivals —a connection which has lasted, I may say, almost without intermission up to the present time.

These festivals in England are a great institution, and go far, in my opinion, to contradict the assertion that the English, as a nation, are unmusical. The festivals are all triennial. The choruses are composed mostly of amateurs, and part of the orchestra is composed of amateurs also. The rehearsals last sometimes for a whole year beforehand, ensuring effective knowledge of the music and unanimity in its execution. These rehearsals are pursued with the greatest industry and enthusiasm by each and every local amateur society that is to take part in the festival.

My early training in sacred music in the church at Albany stood me in good stead, and I soon gained a reputation for my interpretation of sacred music.

When I first came to England, poor Madame Titiens was the principal soprano at most of the festivals, and I sang at two or three with her, only taking a less important part. Since her death I have sung the principal soprano parts in all the oratorios.

At this first festival one of the principal artistes fell ill and could not sing. The committee asked me if I could help them in their sudden difficulty, and kindly reassured me by saying that if I would sing "Angels, ever bright and fair" it would be amply sufficient. I promised to do my best, and was rewarded by the warm appreciation of the public. I remember seeing, and cannot help smiling as I think of it, the walls of Norwich placarded with the simple announcement that Mlle. Albani would sing "Angels, ever bright and fair."

Among the artistes who took part in the festivals, and with all of whom I have sung more than once, were, besides Madame Titiens, Madame Lemmens Sherrington, Madame Patey, Madame Trebelli, Mr. (now Sir Charles) Santley, Mr. Edward Lloyd, Mr. Maas, and Signor Foli. Some of these have unhappily gone from amongst us, but I can call to mind many splendid performances with which they were associated, and I recollect vividly the splendid tones of Madame Titiens's voice, so finely trained and so eminently suited to the music of oratorio. Madame Trebelli also, although her method was purely Italian, was extraordinarily successful in oratorio, and

most clever in every variety of music. It was a true pleasure to me, for example, to sing with her the "Quis est homo" from the "Stabat Mater" of Rossini. Madame Patey will be remembered in England as long as oratorio lasts for many of the solos she sang, but probably above all for "O, rest in the Lord," from "Elijah," in the rendering of which she has rarely, if ever, been equalled, and assuredly never been surpassed.

An amusing, though at the time somewhat painful, incident that happened on my benefit night at Covent Garden is perhaps worth recording here. When at the end of the opera I was recalled before the curtain, a gentleman sitting in one of the front rows of the stalls threw me a bouquet and a jewel case. Unfortunately for his good intentions, the case struck me in the middle of the forehead with considerable violence. The gentleman could be seen making frantic gestures of despair as, with my hands pressed to my forehead, I rushed off the stage to my dressing-room. The application of a few simple remedies soon made me feel all right, and possibly my recovery may have been hastened by the fact that, on opening the case, I discovered

that it contained a beautiful diadem set with brilliants.

For the winter season of 1872–3 I was engaged at the Italian Opera in Paris. This was then held at the Salle Ventadour, a not very large, but very commodious, theatre, the acoustic properties of which were very good.

Here I had to await the suffrages of a distinctly different public to that of either Italy or England. I sang in the "Sonnambula," "Lucia," and "Rigoletto," and my fears were soon laid to rest by the warmth of applause showered on me by one of the most discriminating and, as it can be, difficult publics in the world.

It seemed to have become my destiny always to make my début in "La Sonnambula," and Paris was no exception to this rule. I sang it for my first appearance, my *partenaire* being M. Capoul as Elvino, who sang the music with the greatest charm. It seemed, to my delight, that my old Maestro Lamperti's choice of my opera had again brought me luck, for the Paris critics were enthusiastic in their appreciation, and wrote of "the new star that had appeared on the operatic horizon."

My time during the winter was almost entirely taken up with my work, but all the leisure I could spare I devoted to visiting the picture-galleries, old buildings, and the many historical interests in which Paris abounds.

Here, as elsewhere, since I began my career, I met with nothing but help and sympathy from my brother and sister artistes. I had heard much about the jealousies and difficulties often only too rife in a theatre, but I can truly assert that the sympathetic pleasure I always feel myself in the talent and success of any of my colleagues, was ungrudgingly given to me by one and all, bringing sunshine into my operatic life, and lightening its inevitable work and anxieties.

I have been told a story—let us hope it is but a "story"—that a celebrated singer was once heard to exclaim, "There is one soprano in the world I do *not* hate, and that is Emma Lajeunesse, whom they call Albani!"

During my second season at Covent Garden I sang in "La Sonnambula," "Lucia," "Linda di Chamounix," "Marta," and, for me, two new rôles, those of Ophelia in the "Hamlet" of Ambroise Thomas, and the Countess in Mozart's "Nozze di Figaro." One of the first London critics wrote in the highest

appreciation of these performances, and other papers were equally indulgent.

"Mlle. Albani's *rentrée*," wrote one critic, "was attended with a result which, though anticipated, was none the less striking. Such demonstrations in favour of so young an artiste as were evoked last evening are exceptional in any country, and in London the only previous examples are those evoked on the occasion of the début of Madame Adelina Patti, with whose talent as well as success Mlle. Albani seems destined to enter into rivalry."

In "Hamlet" I had the great advantage and pleasure of singing with M. Faure, and in "Le Nozze di Figaro" with M. Faure and M. Maurel. Both these fine artistes had made great reputations before coming to London, which they have ever since brilliantly maintained.

Whenever possible I went to the opera, listening with delight to the great singers who then were the favourites of all London, witnessing an ensemble in almost every opera which can never be surpassed.

I may here repeat a little story, the keen edge of which, however, I am glad to say, is taken off by the fact that it was Madame

Patti herself who told it to me. One morning, she said, she was walking with her husband in Regent Street, and as she stopped at a shop window to look at a number of photographs, a gentleman who had come up behind her (and of course not seeing who she was), said to his friend, "There's the portrait of Albani: they say she'll cut Patti out"—upon which Madame Patti turned round and exclaimed, "*Thank* you, sir!" and walked away.

During the August of this year I was engaged for the Birmingham Festival to sing scenas from the operas at the three miscellaneous concerts only, as Madame Titiens and Madame Lemmens Sherrington were singing the soprano parts in the oratorios. I am proud to say I have been engaged for this important festival ever since.

CHAPTER V

SINGING BEFORE ROYALTY

Later in the autumn I was engaged in Russia, and sang at Moscow and St. Petersburg during the winter of 1873–4.

In those days the Italian opera took place at the Imperial theatres, and was conducted somewhat on the following principle.

A manager was chosen from amongst the operatic impresarii of Europe by the Minister who had the control of the Royal theatres. He was given the theatre and was allowed to conduct his season, being subject only to certain restrictions and regulations imposed by the Minister.

If the manager made a profit on the season, he put it into his pocket; but if there was a deficit, it was paid by the Emperor, as the whole personnel of the theatre, including the performers, was looked upon as part of the Royal Household. There was never much danger of the latter eventuality occurring, as

the Russians are very fond of the opera, and there was very little other music in Russia.

For several years now no Italian opera has existed in Russia, as the theatres have been given up to national opera, and Royal patronage given to everything Russian. True, there has been from time to time some Italian opera, but it has been done by private enterprise, and has had to be given in an inferior theatre.

I sang at nine performances in Moscow, beginning in November and ending before Christmas, when the season finished there. I had succeeded in pleasing the Russian people, who, in contradiction to their cold climate, are warm-hearted and responsive. A correspondent wrote to the *Times* as follows :

" Mlle. Albani has quite *entraîné* the subscribers to the opera at Moscow. She has appeared on nine occasions, each succeeding night being a greater success than the preceding one."

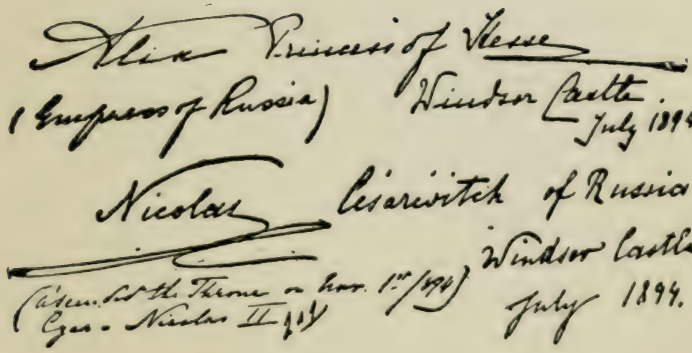
I sang in Moscow in " La Sonnambula," " Hamlet," " Lucia," and, for my last and benefit night, in " Rigoletto." On this last evening the Governor, Prince Dolgourouky, who had been a constant attendant at the opera, was present in his box, and sent me a

magnificent bouquet of camellias and roses. At the end of the opera the subscribers gave me a splendid basket of flowers, to which was attached a jewel-case containing a very large butterfly composed of brilliants and rubies, with an enormous emerald forming the body. More and more flowers descended upon the stage from all parts of the house, until it was nearly covered.

The Russian public is the most enthusiastic one I have ever known. When they like a singer, there is no limit to their expressions of approval, and I have sometimes been obliged to appear before the curtain twenty and twenty-five times and more in one evening. I have never ceased to feel grateful for the warm welcome with which, as a young singer, I was received by my kind Russian audiences.

From Moscow the whole Italian Opera Company, and I naturally with them, moved to St. Petersburg for the season there, which commenced as soon as all the Christmas festivities were over. I sang in the same operas as I had sung in Moscow, and it was during this season that I was presented and spoke to the first reigning monarch I had ever had the honour to approach.

The Czar Alexander II. was often present



A PAGE FROM MADAME ALBANI'S AUTOGRAPH BOOK

at the opera, and I remember on one of my first nights his coming on to the stage, speaking to me, and very kindly complimenting me on my voice and singing. I was very frightened, but very pleased. He subsequently sent me a lovely and very valuable diamond ornament in recognition of my singing at a State concert.

As all the troupe of the opera belonged to the "maison de l'Empereur," the Czar commanded the singers when he pleased, and instead of any sum of money, made them a present varying in value according to their status in the theatre. I have been told that it was the custom for some of the artistes to take their brooches or bracelets back to the jeweller from whom they were bought and receive money for them, so that in this way a particular piece of jewellery might be presented several times over.

I need not say that I treasure all my Russian presents, and especially the diamond cross, in remembrance of Alexander II., who met with so cruel and undeserved a fate. His Imperial Majesty's was a personality that struck me both forcibly and sympathetically, even at first sight. His kindness and courtesy were remarkable; his innate dignity as simple as it was royal; and his face such a good

face—to use a homely expression—that one felt assured it must belong to him who did good deeds, and loved to do them; and it was he, it will be remembered, who carried out, in the teeth of the most strenuous opposition, the liberation of the Serfs. That he was mistaken in the period at which he did it, that he failed to realise how unfit the Serfs really were for that liberty, which it must take them years of education to know how to use and enjoy properly, were errors into which his mind fell, but to which his heart never gave assent. Criticism should shrink back before so noble an effort, and praise, not blame, be accorded to the murdered Emperor.

The great event of the winter was the marriage of the Duke of Edinburgh to the Grand Duchess Maria of Russia, only daughter of the Czar. As a part of the Emperor's Household, the principal artistes of the Italian opera were commanded to sing during the Imperial banquet, which took place after the marriage ceremony.

We were placed in a gallery facing the Imperial table in the great White Hall of the palace, and we looked down on a scene the magnificence of which I can never forget,

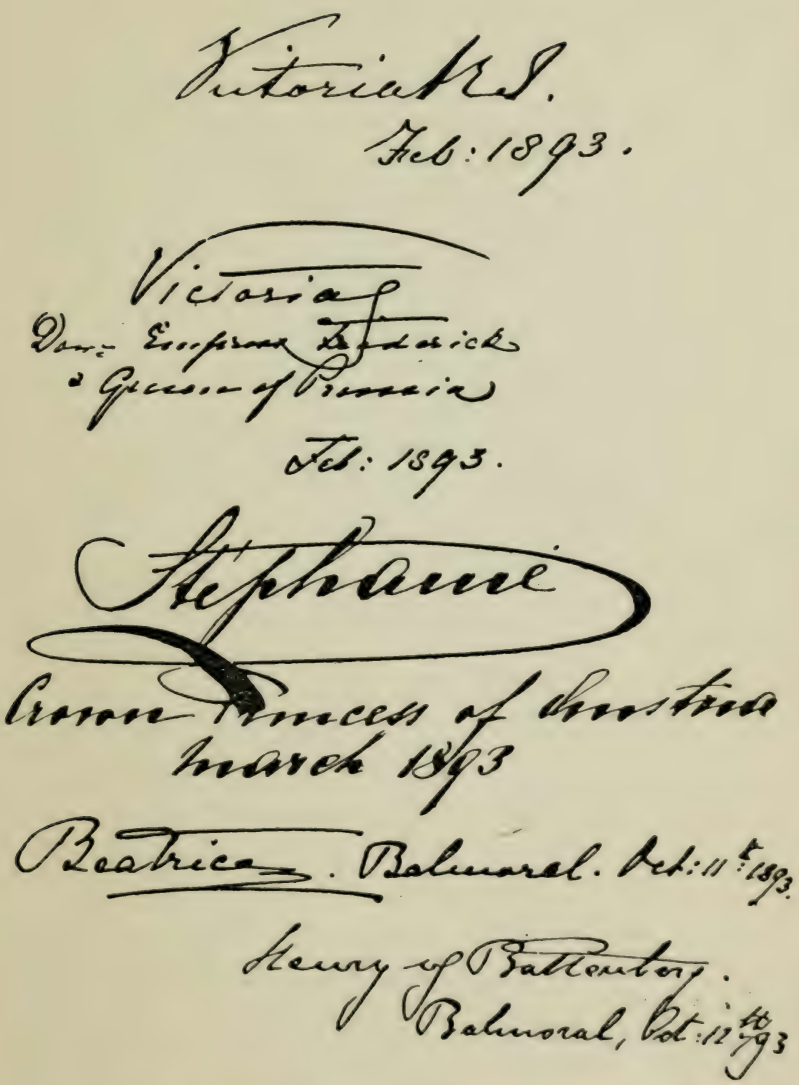
combining as it did the modern perfection of Western civilisation with the remains of the barbarous splendour of Oriental life.

Very disturbing incidents with regard to the music took place during the banquet. Several "toasts" were proposed, and before each a great flourish of trumpets was sounded. This was done without any regard to what was going on in the gallery, or who was singing. Luckily I escaped this during my song, but one or two of the solos were sadly marred by the trumpeters. The clatter of plates and of knives and forks also did not help the harmony of our efforts.

In Russia, at all Court functions, the Russian ladies are obliged to wear the old national Court costume, which consists of flowing and richly embroidered robes, and a sort of high diadem head-dress, which is literally covered with jewels, the jewels owned by the Royal and most of the noble families in Russia being amongst the rarest and finest in the world. On this occasion the Imperial table alone was a most marvellous sight. The row of glittering and varied uniforms, alternating with the diamond tiaras, necklaces, and splendid jewels of all descriptions, and the rich embroideries of the ladies' dresses, their cos-

tumes being mostly of velvet of every shade and colour, trimmed with precious stones and priceless furs, formed a *coup d'œil*, the beauty of which is as difficult to imagine as it is adequately to describe. Perhaps I cannot do better than quote the account given by Signor Arditi, who conducted his own cantata which was performed at the wedding ceremony,

"The reception-rooms of the Winter Palace," he says, "which are of stupendous proportions, were illuminated by hundreds of thousands of wax candles, which heightened the brilliant and dazzling effect of the magnificent jewellery worn by the illustrious guests. St. Petersburg has long been renowned for its lavish display of precious stones at Royal and other distinguished functions, and is considered to be the city *par excellence* for general gorgeousness of array. The ladies were clad in rich robes of cloth-of-silver or cloth-of-gold, the bodices of which were shrouded in priceless Valenciennes or Brussels lace, while diaphanous veils floated from their jewelled Russian caps on to the costly trains beneath. The British Duke's distinguished air and pleasant manner entirely won the hearts of those who were present to



THE FIRST PAGE OF MADAME ALBANI'S AUTOGRAPH BOOK

wish him God-speed, and the illustrious hero of the evening, together with his lovely bride, were very greatly admired. I shall never forget," Signor Arditi continues, " the extraordinary effect produced by the huge, roaring furnaces which had been built outside in the courtyards of the palace for the benefit and comfort of the coachmen, who cowered round them, endeavouring to keep warm, while they awaited their Royal masters. Without these furnaces they must, one and all, inevitably have been frozen to death, since the cold that year was more horribly intense than I ever remember it to have been on any of my previous visits to the Russian capital."

From Russia I returned to London for the opera season of 1874, singing in my previous operas, the " Sonnambula," " Lucia," " Linda di Chamounix," " Marta," etc., etc., and also singing in many concerts both public and private.

It was during this season that I was honoured with a command to sing at Windsor, where for the first time I saw Queen Victoria, and here began that warm appreciation and faithful interest in me on the part of Her Majesty—I might almost venture to say

friendship — which ended only with her life.

I need scarcely say that I deeply felt and as deeply reciprocated Her Majesty's generous attachment to me, of which I can never be sufficiently proud or sufficiently happy to have had the privilege of enjoying.

It was not alone the distinguished honour bestowed by a great and extraordinarily gifted Queen ; it was that even higher moral support and love for those for whom she cared which seemed to radiate from Queen Victoria.

On that first occasion I sang, quite privately for Her Majesty, "Caro nome," "Robin Adair," the "Ave Maria" of Gounod, and "Home, Sweet Home," all of which the Queen was pleased to say she had much enjoyed. She praised my voice and my singing, and with a discrimination that told me at once how thoroughly she understood music and the art of singing. Indeed, as I continually noticed in after-years, it was all but impossible to find any subject on which Her Majesty was not well informed, and generally far better informed than any one else who might happen to be present.

That she loved music it is scarcely necessary for me to say. Almost every school of music

Balmoral Castle.
Oct. 29. 1891.

Dear Madame Albani
Gye,

I am sending you with these lines the Souvenir I spoke of, whose I wished you would keep in recollection of that charming Evening of the 18th of Sept: which I always remember with pleasure.

Trusting that you will have a good journey & that your health may be good & your next season prosperous

believe me always,
yours very sincerely
Victoria R. & I.

FACSIMILE OF A LETTER FROM QUEEN VICTORIA TO MADAME ALBANI.

appeared to appeal to Queen Victoria. Sometimes she would ask me to sing two or three or more little French songs, one after another. Then she would suggest something by Brahms, or perhaps Grieg, or possibly Handel or Mendelssohn; and often I have concluded with some simple song that I knew she was fond of. Scotch songs, in particular, appealed to her very strongly. She never grew tired, for instance, of "The Bluebells of Scotland," which she generally spoke of as "the Hieland Laddie song." Other Scotch songs of which she was very fond were "Annie Laurie" and "Within a Mile of Edinboro' Town." On occasions she would ask me to sing for an hour or more nothing but Mendelssohn. He and Lablache had been her music masters in the early years of her married life, and Prince Albert had always entertained a very high opinion of Mendelssohn in particular. I am inclined to think, though I may of course be mistaken, that my singing of Mendelssohn sometimes recalled to the Queen's memory pleasant recollections of the years that had fled. Number after number of Mendelssohn's oratorios she would listen to with rapt attention, and often when I stopped singing she would remain for some moments

in a sort of reverie. Sometimes she failed to remember the words of some song she particularly wished me to sing. On those occasions—rather rare occasions, I am bound to admit—she would herself hum over the air in order to recall the piece to my memory.

Another of Queen Victoria's favourite composers was Gounod. His opera "Faust" was composed only just before the death of Prince Albert, and as, after the Prince Consort's death, she made up her mind never to attend another public performance either at the opera or at a theatre, she did not see it produced. Yet she never wearied of hearing me sing bits out of the opera. Then, when Sir Arthur Sullivan wrote for me his glorious "Golden Legend," I induced the Queen to listen to certain portions of it that I thought would prove irresistible. In the end she became intensely eager to attend a performance of Sir Arthur Sullivan's masterpiece, and though I did not venture actually to suggest it, I did endeavour indirectly to foster her desire to be present at one performance. Finally the "Golden Legend" was produced at Leeds. For some months after that the Queen did not again broach the subject of attending a public performance.

Then one morning, to my surprise and great delight, she sent word to me to say that she had definitely decided to witness the performance of the "Golden Legend" just advertised to take place at the Albert Hall. The day arrived, and when I came forward to sing my first solo and saw the Queen occupying the Royal box, attended by several members of the Royal Family, I think I felt more delighted than I have ever felt in my life before.

One of her ladies-in-waiting was the Dowager Lady Erroll, whose sister Mrs. Rich was an intimate friend of mine in Malta. These sisters were the nieces of the Duchess of Inverness, to whom this title had been given after the death of her husband the Duke of Sussex, and the Queen, on being told of our intimate acquaintance, had invited Mrs. Rich to be present. Her Majesty had also heard from Mrs. Rich that I was a Roman Catholic, and with that tact and thoughtfulness which, as I very soon came to discover, was, in the Queen, ever present, Her Majesty selected a most beautiful pearl cross and necklace, which were sent to me the next day with the following letter from Sir Thomas Biddulph, by the Queen's command:

"Windsor Castle,
"*July* 8, 1874.

"Sir T. M. Biddulph presents his compliments to Madame Albani. He is desired by the Queen to ask her to accept the accompanying necklace and cross as a souvenir of her visit to Windsor last week."

This cross I have worn almost without intermission ever since.

Amongst other presents from Queen Victoria were two portraits of herself; one was the first taken when she came to the throne, the other taken at the time of her jubilee. She also gave me a small portrait in a silver and enamel case, saying at the time, "I hear that you always carry my photograph with you in your travels. This one will be a more convenient one." I need hardly say that this one has been with me ever since.

CHAPTER VI

MY FIRST AMERICAN TOUR

In the autumn of this year I was engaged for the opera in the United States, and before sailing sang at the Liverpool Festival, where Madame Patti was also singing. The manager of the enterprise in America was Mr. Max Strakosch. My lady companion went with me, and as I was under an engagement for all the year round to Mr. Gye, he sent his son Mr. Ernest Gye to look after his interests in America.

The season opened in New York at the old Academy of Music, a large theatre, but one which since has been superseded by a finer opera house. I sang in "La Sonnambula," "Lucia," "Rigoletto," and "Mignon," and in this last opera was included in the cast a celebrated American contralto, Miss Cary, who had a beautiful voice, and also Mlle. Heilbron as Filina. The latter was already well known in London.

I was most kindly received, and sang to audiences whose appreciation did but increase as the season progressed, the newspapers all warmly endorsing the verdict of the public.

The *New York Times* of October 22, 1874, wrote :

" Mr. Strakosch introduced last evening to an American audience Mlle. Albani, and in so doing, won a great victory. . . . Mlle. Albani's success, and as a consequence the success of her impresario, was not marked by the rendering of a merely favourable verdict, but by a rare demonstration of enthusiasm. Mlle. Albani's performance was so striking as to justify the most rapturous applause, and so finished as to disarm the coldest connoisseur. Her singing is perfect. Mlle. Nilsson's, in point of purity and elegance of phrasing, unerring accuracy of intonation and general good taste, was vastly inferior to it. Mlle. Lucca's rank as an artist is not the result of that lady's mastery of the vocal art. Mlle. Albani's work was a revelation.

" It was neither the offspring of wholly French schooling nor of the commonplace teaching of Italian *maestri*, but something com-

paratively fresh to the ear, as grateful as the song of the bird, as chaste and beautiful in tone and form as the delivery of a theme from the classics by the bow of Joachim or Vieuxtemps. . . . As we have implied, Amina is but a small rôle, but it was of sufficient length to serve its purpose. The expressive delivery —calm, thoughtful almost, but of matchless chastity and rare richness of sound—of 'Come per me sereno' showed at once how splendid was the method of the débutante, while the succeeding allegro 'Sovra il seu,' with its ornate repetition of the theme, asserted her fitness to cope with florid music, not as a time-worn songstress with large experience and the relics of a voice, but as the owner of young and exquisite tones. . . . Mlle. Albani stirred her audience to an unprecedented pitch of excitement in the rondo preceding the fall of the curtain. Never in the memory of the present generation has 'Ah! non giunge' been given with the same wealth of tone, brilliancy, and surety. The sweet andante prefacing it, commencing 'Ah! non credea,' was a fine specimen of eloquence in song, but the 'broidery of the rondo carried the assemblage beyond the limits of ordinary admiration, and the air was broken in upon

again and again by spontaneous outbursts of applause."

The *New York Herald* of October 24, 1874, said of "Lucia di Lammermoor":

"Rarely has the Academy of Music witnessed a triumph so genuine, so well founded, and we might say so enduring, as that achieved by Mlle. Albani last night. . . . The opening aria 'Regnava nel silenzio,' which is generally treated with indifference by representatives of the rôle, was rendered by Mlle. Albani with as much care, expression, and dramatic power as even the final scene. She acted the scene with the same effect as she sang it. The Cabaletta was an idyll of vocal beauty in its delicacy. . . ."

A rather disturbing incident occurred one night during the performance of "Lucia." Just as the curtain went up a general alarm of fire was sounded, but so absorbed were the audience that scarcely a seat was vacated, and no confusion whatever resulted.

In the beginning of November I paid a flying visit to Albany, where I sang in a concert to the dear friends to whose goodness I owed all my musical education abroad, and whose kindness had so genuinely aided me to return to them in the happy position I had attained.

Their welcome was equalled only by their former kindness, and the *Albany Argus* wrote :

"Now she returns, every hand is extended to welcome her back home ; from every lip issues heartfelt compliments—in a word, her triumph is of the most genuine nature and character."

On the occasion of this visit I was shown a poem which had been written by a Miss Bulger, who was one of my schoolfellows at the Convent of the Sacred Heart at Kenwood, and has since become a nun. The poem is as follows :

"ALBANI"

The curtain is up and the lights turned on,
And an audience listens breathlessly
As Albani's soul floats into song
And warbles as if in ecstasy.

Thousands are sitting spellbound there ;
Some magic influence seems to come
With the wonderful trill of each opera air
Or the tender pathos of "Home, Sweet Home."

Rare flowers at the feet of the songstress fall,
Her jewels are such as a queen might wear—
What a brilliant scene is the crowded hall
With wealth and fashion gathered there !

But the voice that stirs each listening heart
And dims each watching eye with tears,
Has bidden me steal from this scene apart
And wander back through bygone years.

FORTY YEARS OF SONG

How vividly does memory bring
  To me a convent chapel, where
A girlish voice was wont to sing
  At eventime a soft, sweet air!

I am not heedless nor am I cold:
  Albani, your voice with a magic spell
Brings back to me the days of old,
  With those who knew you and loved you well!

The roses that bloomed in those bygone days
  Have come at your bidding to life again,
And mingling to-night with the world's great praise
  Are the voices of those who praised you then.

Some are distant and some are dead,
  And the name of each I am sure you know;
You were dear to them all in those sweet days fled,
  The girlhood days of long ago.

How real it seems!—that quiet hour
  That came at the end of those sweet days,
When we little dreamed of the singer's power
  To make time's after-thought of praise.

How still it seems!—just as of old
  When shadows had hushed the songbird's trill,
And silence cast a spell untold
  On rock and river, on wood and hill.

But stiller than all seems that chapel where
  The altar-lights shine through shadows dim,
And heads bend reverently in prayer,
  While hearts are touched by the low, sweet hymn.

But the curtain is up and the lights are on—
  Why do I dream so heedlessly?
Why should I think of the years long gone
  And lose such exquisite melody?

To-night while applause rings loud and long,
And the Present's gifts at your feet are cast,
The flowers that spring into life at your song
I bring as a tribute sent by the Past.

Though the curtain is up and the lights turned on,
Their magic petals no eye can see,
And, viewed in the light of those dear days gone,
Are they not real to you and me ?

Here are reddest of roses, O Queen of Song,
Royal and rare as your wondrous fame ;
And to you, true woman and wife, belong
These snowy ones, white as your spotless name.

Accept them both, the red and the white,
A prayer and a blessing go with them, I know,
From those in whose name I give you to-night
Those grand June roses of long ago.

E. M. V. B.

Monday night, January 15.

I was also told a little story by a friend. He happened to meet a veteran sergeant of police who had been to my concert at the Academy of Music. " I heard Albani," said the sergeant—" she was Miss Lajeunesse then—sing many years ago. She sang for a party of policemen one New Year's Day when we were calling upon the people with whom she lived. The house was on Grand Street, and when we had been there about five minutes the old gentleman said : ' I'm sorry, boys, that I can't offer you anything

stiff to drink, but you know my wife is opposed to that sort of thing. Miss Lajeunesse, however, will play for you.' Then one of the boys said, 'Perhaps Miss Lajeunesse will favour us with a song?' 'Why, certainly,' said she. And I tell you she did sing! She sang some old ballads, simple, old-fashioned songs, but there was more than one pair of eyes that weren't quite dry when she finished, and for a while the boys didn't have much to say. Then I thanked her in the name of the boys, and we got out. Now she's famous the world over, but I'll bet she never sang better than she did in that little room many years ago for us policemen."

Several of my friends in Albany evidently wished to see me married, as all kinds of rumours were going round about my engagement and my approaching marriage. These rumours were contradicted by the *Albany Morning Express* in the following characteristic paragraph:

"A correspondent—and, we assume, a lady—writes us to ask if it is true that Mlle. Albani, with whom in years gone by she was somewhat intimate, is married or engaged to be married. On behalf of the correspondent we have taken the pains to ascertain precisely,

and now can assure her and others positively that the lady is not engaged, and that we were mistaken in so stating some time back. It may be supposed that the correspondent and ourselves are—well, indiscreet, in touching upon a matter of so delicate a nature, but we feel that it will be pleasant for Miss Emma's admirers to know that in her great prosperity she is as heart and fancy free as the morning when she left her old home on Arbor Hill six years ago. This much we say at the instance of one who has the confidence and friendship of our prima donna."

At the Albany concert I sang "Ardon gl' incensi," from "Lucia," "Home, Sweet Home," a duet, "Brindisi Waltz," with Miss Cary, and the "Last Rose of Summer," and was completely overwhelmed by the applause and recalls showered on me. I felt almost as if all Albany were composed of one enormous family, and I the one long-exiled member of it who had just come "home."

I returned to New York, singing in "Mignon" again for several nights, and then in "Marta." The latter opera pleased greatly, but most of all the "Last Rose of Summer," which Flotow has put into the part of Lady Enrichetta.

The first time I sang it, the audience burst into a storm of applause and demanded its repetition. When I repeated it, and sang the original Irish words of Moore, the whole opera house was roused to a positive furore of enthusiasm. When I sang in "Marta" after that in America, I had always to repeat the "Last Rose," and in English.

The great musical event of this season was, for me, the reproduction of "Lohengrin." The opera had been given the year before, Madame Nilsson impersonating Elsa. Mr. Strakosch had not intended giving it during this season, but in accordance with many requests he suddenly decided to do so, and begged me to sing it. It was getting late, there was but little time in which to study it, and there never is sufficient leisure during the constant work of a season to learn new operas thoroughly. Moreover, I had never even seen the score or heard the opera.

However, I yielded to Mr. Strakosch's earnest request, and, notwithstanding the importance and the difficulties of such an opera as "Lohengrin," I set to work, and devoting all the spare time I could find and all my energies to it, I succeeded in learning and singing "Lohengrin" in the short space

of fifteen days—a *tour de force* I should never have attempted had I been given time to think. But here my early training as a musician helped me so greatly that I was enabled to accomplish what I otherwise could never have done. I had hitherto sung very little except pure Italian operas, and this music of Wagner's, magnificent as it is, was so entirely different, that I could not help feeling very nervous as to the result. Happily, the " end justified the means," and the public and the newspapers judged my rendering of the music and rôle of Elsa as highly as they had done my Amina, Lucia, Gilda, Mignon, Marta, and other characters, kindly assuring me that I could sing the music of Wagner as well as I could that of the Italian composers.

The *Republic*, New York, of November 26, said :

" Mlle. Albani made her first appearance as Elsa, and her execution of the music, her magnificent vocalisation, and thorough dramatic conception of the part were equally gratifying. Evidently imbued with the sentiment of the character, as well as with the spirit of Wagner's music, Mlle. Albani was sweet, charming, and satisfying. She has undoubtedly added

to her répertoire a new and vivid illustration of her genius and musical ability."

And again :

" The worst enemies of Wagner—and he has many obdurate ones—cannot but admit that there is a peculiar spell of fascination about his melodious harmonies, and of these Mlle. Albani looks, acts, and sings as the very priestess of them might."

The principal artistes who sang with me in " Lohengrin " were Miss Cary, Signor Carpi, and Signor del Puente.

The American public can, I have heard, be rather alarming, but it is a very good and appreciative one, and I soon felt at home with my audiences at the Academy of Music. I was even on fairly good terms with that much-discussed " institution " the American interviewer, though I confess I might have occasionally improved our relations could I have given more of the time and of the details so constantly demanded of me, and have brought myself to stretch the limits I personally think should determine the boundary as to what the public has a right to know, and that which every individual person has the exclusive right to retain.

During this winter opera season King

Kalakua, King of the Sandwich Islands, was on a visit to the United States, and while in New York he came one evening to the opera when I was singing in "Lohengrin." He was received with much ceremony by the Mayor and Corporation of New York, and was presented by the Mayor with an immense bouquet. During the performance he asked to be introduced to me, and after the second act he came to my dressing-room, congratulated me warmly in excellent English, and presented me with the bouquet. I, of course, was very gratified by his kindness. He did not forget me, for later when he was in England he came to hear me again at Covent Garden, on this occasion decorating me with his Order of Merit, and giving me an invitation to sing in the Sandwich Islands.

At the close of the New York season our opera company visited Boston, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington, Chicago, and other big towns, where performances of opera were given and where I sang the same répertoire.

On my return from America I was asked to go to Venice to sing at three representations at the Venice Theatre in honour of the great occasion of the visit of the Emperor of Austria, who was to enter Lombardy for the first

time after its cession by Austria to Italy. King Victor Emmanuel met the Emperor at Venice, and both sovereigns, accompanied by Queen Margherite, came to the gala performance at the opera, where I and the great tenor Tamagno sang in " Lucia."

I had just sung some bars of my first aria when their Majesties arrived. The opera was stopped, the Austrian hymn played, the whole house rose, and there was a storm of enthusiastic greeting such as few but Italian audiences ever give, and it was some time before the opera could be resumed, and I had to begin my air all over again.

This was the first time I had met Signor Tamagno. He was one of the artistes of that winter season in Venice, and had been singing the " Guarany " of Gomez with tremendous success. He could then hardly have been more than twenty-three years of age, was very tall, extremely good-looking, especially on the stage, and possessed a true tenor voice which was simply phenomenal in force and quality. His natural talent was stupendous, for he had actually studied but little then, and his success was so immediate that no time was given him for further study, and he took engagement after engagement, leaving

himself no time to arrive at that artistic perfection in his art to which his natural gifts would have enabled him to attain, and to become the finest *tenore di forza* of his own, and perhaps of any other, time. When the "Otello" of Verdi was being brought out, Verdi himself took Signor Tamagno in hand, and taught him the part which was magnificently suited both to his splendid voice and temperament; and it is certain that no one has ever equalled him in that rôle.

I remember being greatly struck on that occasion with the beauty and gracious manner of Queen Margherita, and also with the nine rows of immense and lovely pearls which she wore, the rows being at first tightly wound round her throat, but lengthening gradually until the last formed a long circle extending some way down the skirt of her dress. I believe these pearls have become historical in their rarity and beauty. I received a message of most kind and gracious compliment from all their Majesties, expressing their delight and appreciation.

I sang also the "Puritani" at the Fenice in the following autumn, when, after the London season, I fulfilled a short engagement there, meeting with a great reception. My singing

of the " Puritani " pleased the Venetians so much that on my last night I was almost covered with flowers on the stage, escorted to my hotel by a procession of gondolas, and serenaded beneath my balcony. Venice, however, might have proved fatal to me that night, for in all the excitement I forgot where I was in leaving the opera house, and stepped into the water instead of into the gondola. Luckily I was seized and lifted into safety, but only just in time!

Venice has always had a great charm for me—indeed, hers is a charm which takes actual and forcible possession of all those to whom she appeals in any degree at all. Her marvellous beauty, her climate, her historical associations, are so absolutely unique. The delightful sensation of rest and charm in being rowed about in a gondola was to me a source of infinite pleasure. While singing in Venice I always took my daily " drive " in a gondola, gliding over her waters to the Lido, and drinking in the refreshing breezes of the sea. Venice has a poetry all her own, and one which is wellnigh indescribable.

CHAPTER VII

WAGNER OPERAS IN LONDON

THE Italian opera season of 1875 began in April, and I speedily made my *rentrée* in "La Sonnambula." My second and third operas were "Lucia" and "Rigoletto," the part of the Jester in the latter opera being then sung by Signor Graziani, one of the greatest favourites of the English public. He possessed a most beautiful, rich, and melodious voice, exactly suited to the music of the old Italian operas, and it was a real treat to hear him sing these melodies, and, in duets and concerted pieces, to sing with him. He was a *bon camarade*, and liked by all his fellow-artistes, though he could occasionally be a rather trying *partenaire*, for his sense of fun was a little apt to bubble over. Often in some most pathetic situation he would say some ludicrous thing, or make some gesture or other unseen by the audience, which

would try one's gravity to breaking-point, much to his delight.

The principal event of this season was the first performance in England of "Lohengrin" at Covent Garden. For several years Mr. Gye had been urged by more than one German musician to give Wagner's operas, but the prevalent taste for more consecutive melody was so marked at that period that he feared Wagner's music would be found too heavy to interest any but the comparatively few really learned musicians among the Italian opera audiences. He himself appreciated the genius of Wagner and the magnificence of much of his music; but he made a curious prophecy on leaving the Vienna Opera House, where he had gone expressly to hear "Lohengrin" for the first time. As he came away he said, "It is *fine*; but if that is to be the music of the future, there will be neither singers nor composers left." As to how far he was justified, I may later on have some few words to say.

But none the less Mr. Gye decided to give "Lohengrin," and, to my delight, I was allotted the rôle of Elsa, which, through having sung it in America only the winter before, I knew well. Nevertheless, I wished to have

all the traditions of the opera—a thing which had, of course, been impossible in America—and so I went to Germany just before the opera season began, to go through a fortnight's hard study of my part in Munich with Herr Wülner, one of the conductors of the Munich Opera House.

"Lohengrin" at Covent Garden was a splendid success. It was received with great enthusiasm by a record audience, to such an extent that even the whole of the entrance of Lohengrin, which begins with Elsa's prayer, was encored! This is saying much, for Wagner's music in those days was little known, and less appreciated in England. The habitués of Covent Garden had long been accustomed to great *mise en scène* in many operas, but the newspapers remarked on the mounting of "Lohengrin" being quite exceptional, and one of them said, "If Mr. Gye had departed from his usual custom and answered to the call for his appearance, he would have encountered an ovation not easily forgotten."

Signor Nicolini was the Lohengrin of that season, for which the power of his voice, his talent as an actor, and his fine stage presence eminently fitted him. Mlle. d'Angeri was

an excellent Ortruda, amd M. Maurel great in both his singing and acting of Federigo. I feel that I dare not repeat a tithe of the kind criticisms and praise which were bestowed on Elsa, but I continued to sing the part, always a favourite one of mine, for many seasons at Covent Garden, and during the winter seasons abroad, both in Italian and German.

During this season of 1875 I also sang Margherita in Gounod's " Faust " for the first time, the cast including M. Faure, the finest singer and actor of his time, and who was a prime favourite with the public of Covent Garden for many seasons.

One of the débutantes who made a very successful appearance this year was Mlle. Zare Thalberg, a granddaughter of the celebrated pianist, and of Madame Angeri, the well-known contralto. She had a beautiful voice, was very pretty, with much charm in her acting, but she married young and left the stage after a few seasons.

The name of Madame Angeri brings to mind a little joke which was told me. Madame Angeri replaced the famous contralto Mlle. Alboni at the Royal Italian Opera, and it was said that " When Mr. Gye could not get Alboni he got Angeri (angry) ! "

WAGNER OPERAS IN LONDON

In the autumn of 1875 Sir Julius Benedict organised a tour of Italian opera in the English provinces and Ireland. Most of the artistes were chosen from the Covent Garden company, Mlle. Thalberg being among them. We visited Dublin, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Newcastle, Bradford, Leeds, Liverpool, and other places, staying a week in most of the towns, but two weeks in several of the more important places, and giving performances every night. During the tour I sang in the "Sonnambula," "Lucia," "Rigoletto," "Marta," and "Lohengrin."

I remember with some amusement and a good deal of pleasure an incident that happened at Dublin. After my performance on the last night there a number of students insisted on dragging my carriage through the streets from the theatre to my hotel. Afterwards a crowd of, it is said, six thousand people collected in front of the hotel, and would not disperse until I had appeared on the balcony and sung a verse of the "Last Rose of Summer."

In so thoroughly well organised an establishment as Covent Garden was in those days everything was regulated like clockwork, and everybody knew his business; but in a

country theatre, and especially when any company is only there for a week, most things are out of order, and have to be managed in a hand-to-mouth kind of way and in a makeshift style. Occasionally some very droll incidents occur, and I remember a conversation which was overheard on the stage of one of these theatres, which was told me by the manager. "Lohengrin" was being performed, and when the first act was in progress, one of the carpenters said to the man who had charge of the swan, "I'm going round to the front to see this here scene—won't you come?" The other replied, "No; I've got to work the blessed *duck*."

Another very amusing incident that happened once in a provincial theatre was told to me. The opera "Don Giovanni" was being performed, and this requires a man on horseback for the statue scene, the man being a live one but the horse a "property" one. There was nothing in the theatre but a very small horse of wood and canvas about the size of a donkey, but as this was the only thing available, it had to be used. At night the man was set astride the horse and strictly adjured to remain motionless except when he had to bow his

head at the right moment. The man was very long in the legs, and his heels rested on the ground when he was on the horse. This made things so ridiculous that every one was inclined to laugh; but worse was to come, for in the midst of the scene when he should have been as still as death, he gave vent to a loud sneeze, completely upsetting the situation and the gravity of the audience, who roared with laughter.

The public who are in front enjoying a performance little know what is going on behind the scenes, or with what difficulty the various things they see are arranged, and how perilously near to disaster the performers sometimes are. It is a common saying when the rehearsal is not going well, "Oh! it will be all right at night." It generally is, but it has often been a wonder to me how it has come about.

In the early part of 1876 I sang in a few representations of Italian opera at Nice. I was delighted both with the kind welcome I received and the beauty of that lovely country, with its blue sky, bright sunny weather, and profusion of flowers.

One of the principal events of the season of 1876 was the production of Wagner's

"Tannhäuser" at Covent Garden, which took place on May 6 with immense success. I had studied the part of Elisabeth as well as that of Elsa, in Germany, with Herr Wülner, and sang it with, I was assured at the time, the approval of those who did, as well as those who did not, then understand and love Wagner. Indeed, one of the critics said, "'Tannhäuser' was a decided success, no small share of the result being due to Mlle. Albani, whose Elisabeth was the good genius of the piece as her Elsa was that of 'Lohengrin.'" These two operas of Wagner's were very interesting to me to study and to sing.

It is a very common belief that Wagner's music injures the voice, but, in my own opinion, no music should injure the voice, provided the correct method of singing is employed. No doubt many singers have injured their voices by the constant singing of Wagner's operas, but then they would probably have done so by singing much of other music also. In singing with a bad method there is a constant and unnatural strain upon the vocal chords and the whole throat, which leaves behind some damage, small at first, but which little by little

increases, and at last produces the deterioration of the voice. But in singing with the true method, though a certain fatigue is, of course, experienced, it is a natural fatigue, and one from which the voice speedily and entirely recovers with a little rest.

I owe it to my old master Lamperti that I can sing Wagner's operas without greater fatigue than others, and since the days of which I am now speaking I have sung many of his operas a great many times.

Soon after the Christmas of 1876 I went to Paris to fulfil an engagement at the Italian opera there as first soprano, singing in "La Sonnambula," "Lucia," "Puritani," "Rigoletto," and for the first time Zerlina in "Don Giovanni," a rôle identified at Covent Garden for many years with Madame Patti. A very clever artiste, Signor Pandolfini, sang all the principal baritone parts during this season, and was subsequently engaged at Covent Garden. I sang a great deal and bore the chief brunt of this Paris season.

At the end of the season I had a benefit night, at which I sang, "Puritani." The subscribers to the theatre gave me a diamond coronet, besides other gifts, among them a beautiful bangle bracelet of fine emeralds

from a lady subscriber, and a most artistic cross and chain worked in gold, steel, enamel, and emeralds, made expressly for me to wear in "La Sonnambula."

Maréchal MacMahon was President of the French Republic at this time, and I was invited by him and Madame de MacMahon to sing at the Palais de l'Elysée. I met there many representatives of the old French *noblesse*, and among them the Comtesse de Paris. The next day I received, besides a handsome cheque, a beautiful and valuable group of Sèvres biscuit porcelain "in remembrance," and a flattering message from the President and Madame de MacMahon.

At one of the representations I noticed, sitting in a private box, a gentleman with long white hair and beard, watching me with two very bright piercing eyes and evidently with much interest. The opera was "Rigoletto," and in one of the *entr'actes* this gentleman was brought to my dressing-room and introduced to me as "Signor Mario." This was the great Mario, who had retired from the stage a few years previously. He was good enough to say some kind and appreciative words to me about my performance, and added warmly how much he

wished he could have sung the duet with me—which I thought *such* a compliment! It is a memory that I have always treasured.

There are one or two extracts I should like to quote with regard to this Paris season, as they are somewhat amusing. A correspondent to one of the London papers wrote:

"The success of Mlle. Albani at the Théâtre Italien in Paris increases with each performance. It is a pity that French fanaticism will not allow of 'Lohengrin' being produced. Albani's gentle Elsa might reconcile Parisians with Wagner."

The *Pall Mall Gazette*, in commenting on the reports of my success in the Parisian papers, sympathetically remarks:

"We can but rejoice to hear all this of the Canadian girl who four or five years ago arrived in Europe friendless and unknown; having no encouragement but confidence in the possession of the powers which only needed study and hard work to give her success. So she worked on; obliged meanwhile to sing in public in order to provide means for instruction. It must be very pleasant now to look back on those years of resolute perseverance under difficulties."

Lady Hooper, writing to the *New York*

World from Paris at this time, says of me: "What an elastic nationality she possesses! In America she was an American, and hailed from Albany. In England she was declared to be a Canadian and a loyal subject of Her British Majesty. The French papers now state that she is a French woman, her real name being Lajeunesse, and that she was 'born in the state of Albany, in the city of Canada' (*sic*). I understand French newspaper writers study geography. The other day one of them announced that the *Amérique* had gone ashore in 'New York River.' Therefore their somewhat mixed statements respecting the birthplace of the Franco-Anglo-American-Canadian prima donna are not to be wondered at."

By this time the number of my engagements and the consequent work and study they entailed had increased greatly, so that I had but very little leisure. I worked, of course, continually, for no matter how well a thing may seem to go, I have always felt that it was possible for it to go better, and to ensure that result, if it ever be achieved, there is nothing but work, always work.

The opera season of 1877 was to me principally noteworthy for the production

of Wagner's "Flying Dutchman," in which I sang Senta. In the interval between the seasons of Paris and London I went to Dresden and studied the rôle with Herr Wülner, returning as quickly as I could to sing it at Covent Garden. The poetry of all Wagner's heroines has always strongly appealed to me, and in the music and impersonation of Senta I took much delight—a pleasure which was enhanced on this occasion by the co-operation of M. Maurel, who was the Flying Dutchman, and sang and acted the part, as he always did, to perfection.

During this season I alternated my three Wagner operas with those of my Italian and French répertoire.

CHAPTER VIII

THE ENGLISH FESTIVALS

On my return to London in 1875 (to go back a little) I heard of the great changes which were to take place in the festival performances at Worcester. In consequence of the strong opposition of the late Lord Dudley and the Dean, both of whom had always opposed the employment of an orchestra and solo singers in the cathedral, it was proposed to give the festival with only the organ and the choirs of the three cathedrals, and this was agreed to, notwithstanding many protests on the part of the Mayor and the townspeople.

The festival, therefore, was held during this autumn without orchestra or principals, and nothing was performed but anthems and purely Church music. Naturally the shopkeepers and cabmen always do a large business in the festival week, and, as a protest against the action of the authorities, they hung out

black flags and ornamented their whips with crape.

Three years later, in the autumn of 1878, the non-success of the proposed changes induced the authorities again to give the full festival in the cathedral, with the result that a very considerable sum of money was that year handed over to the Charitable Fund for the Widows and Orphans of the Clergy. Besides myself, Miss Anna Williams, Madame Patey, Mr. Edward Lloyd, Mr. Santley, and others, were engaged on that occasion, together with a full orchestra and chorus.

The late Earl of Dudley had considerable influence in Worcester (his fine place, Witley Court, being situated in the county), in consequence of his having done much for the cathedral. By the invitation of Lord and Lady Dudley I spent Christmas with them in 1875. I was received most kindly, and had a delightful visit. There was a large house-party and great Christmas festivities, and on Christmas Day every one had a present. I received a beautiful band bracelet set with diamonds, rubies, sapphires, and other precious stones. It was there that I met the celebrated Samuel Wilberforce, then Bishop of Oxford; in fact, I sat next to

him at dinner the first night, and I was charmed with the kindness of his manner and the talent and wit of his conversation. I only wish that I had retained some portion of what he said, but unfortunately only the general impression of his personality has remained with me.

Canon Melville, Canon of Worcester, and chaplain to Lord Dudley, was also there, and he remained from that time forth a dear friend of mine, showing me the greatest and most unvarying kindness at all the subsequent Worcester festivals.

This same autumn I sang at the Norwich Musical Festival, where the principal artistes associated with me were Madame Patey, Mr. Edward Lloyd, and Signor Foli, the conductor being Sir Julius Benedict. I sang in the "Hymn of Praise" of Mendelssohn, and the "St. Cecilia" of Sir Julius Benedict, which latter work was given for the first time, and had a wonderful success, the last scene being so effective as to create a positive furore. It is an inspiration in melody and eminently suited to a soprano voice.

It was at this festival that I had a curiosity in literature sent to me in the shape of a bill. I must premise that at the festival I have

always, where possible, taken a house for the whole week (a house being so much quieter than an hotel), and therefore tradesmen's accounts have to be dealt with. At the end of this Norwich week the milkman sent in the following account :

Mrs. L. Barney,
To Mr. Cross, Esqr.
21 pints of milk at 1½*d.* — 2*s.* 8½*d.*

"Mr. Cross, Esqr.," had evidently heard my name pronounced but had not seen it in print !

At the Norwich Festival of 1878 I sang the soprano part in "Joseph," a new oratorio by Professor (later Sir George) Macfarren ; and at that of 1881 was produced for the first time "St. Ursula," by Frederick Cowen. Mr. (now Sir Frederick) Cowen's work is a lovely cantata ; in it I created the soprano part, and sang it at Norwich, and afterwards in London, with sincere delight in its fine and touching melody.

It may be interesting to mention here the names of the great singers who have sustained the weight of these festivals in the course of many years. In 1827 Madame Pasta was the first soprano, and at the next

two festivals Madame Malibran, followed by Madame Caradori, and in 1839 by Madame Persiani. For the festival of 1845 Madame Grisi was the soprano, and at the two following festivals Madame Viardot Garcia, the younger sister of the great Malibran. Madame Clara Novello was engaged for the next three festivals, then Madame Titiens for four festivals. I myself followed in 1875, and have sung in the festivals at Norwich continually since.

In the October of 1876 I was engaged as one of the principal sopranos for the Bristol Festival. This was only the second musical festival that had ever been held in Bristol, the first having taken place in 1873. The principal artistes with me were Madame Titiens, Madame Patey, Madame Trebelli, Mr. Edward Lloyd, Mr. Cummings, and Herr Behrens. Sir Charles (then Mr.) Hallé was the conductor.

I sang in "Elijah" for the first time at this festival, and also Beethoven's "Engedi" and the "Messiah," as well as singing at the miscellaneous evening concert. It was my first experience of the great and varied talent of Sir Charles Hallé, an experience which was more and more fully confirmed as years

went on. He was as proficient in German classical music as he was in pure Italian music; and in the French school, especially in the compositions of Berlioz, no one has rivalled him as a conductor. Added to his musical learning, he possessed untiring industry and energy, and he left no stone unturned in his endeavours to complete as far as possible whatever work he might have on hand.

Soon after the Bristol Festival a concert tour was organised in Ireland, Scotland, and England, in which I took part, singing in several towns for the first time. I was very glad of the opportunity which this gave me of getting acquainted with the country and the English public. It was on this tour that I first heard M. Wilhelmj, and I well remember the pleasure which that great artiste's playing gave me.

I met Wilhelmj subsequently at a concert in Glasgow, where we were both engaged, and a little incident comes into my mind. The men artistes took supper together after the concert, and Wilhelmj was anxious to have some whisky, which he had never before tasted. The whisky was brought, and Wilhelmj put three or four lumps of sugar into

it, but no water. The sugar disguised the strength of the spirit, and he found it so good that he ordered a second and then a third allowance, treating them both in the same way. Result : Wilhelmj had a difficulty in finding his bedroom, and he lost his train the next morning !

Sometimes amusing incidents take place at provincial concerts. I remember singing in the " Messiah " at one of them where the band and chorus was mainly composed of amateurs. A lady had charge of the kettle-drums, and at a certain part she missed her cue and got two bars behind. Soon a pause came and the band stopped, but the drums continued all alone, to the great amusement of audience and performers.

I was also engaged this year (1876) for the great Birmingham Festival, which is the most important festival in England, and here it was that I actually began my career of oratorio in England. Madame Titiens was also engaged, and I, being a comparative beginner at these festivals, did not therefore have the most important music allotted to me. I consequently sang only in the first part of the " Messiah," Mendelssohn's " Hear my Prayer," and in the miscellaneous concert.

Sir Michael Costa was the conductor of the festival, and I met him then for the first time. I had heard much about his strictness with the forces under his command, and I was therefore not a little nervous at first. But after I had sung " Hear my Prayer " he complimented me very much, and strongly advised me to take up oratorio, as he was sure that I had the voice and temperament necessary for it.

Sir Michael Costa, from his long connection with the Sacred Harmonic Society, the festivals, and the Crystal Palace, was a splendid director of sacred music, and I found that his *strictness* was only what was necessary to ensure a good performance, for when he recognised talent in an artiste he was most kind and helpful.

At one of the concerts I sang for the first time " Casta Diva " from Bellini's " Norma," and I was very pleased to be allowed to sing this great aria, though, as it had always been identified with Madame Grisi and Madame Titiens, it was no slight undertaking for so young a singer. However, it went very well, and the public were very kind to me—a fact that I always remember with gratification. The following day, at the house of the Chairman

of the Festival Committee, I met the distinguished Scandinavian composer, Herr Niels Gade, who had composed a work for this festival, and was in Birmingham in consequence. He spoke to me about my rendering of "Casta Diva," and said, "I heard you yesterday, and your singing and voice reminded me of my great compatriote Jenny Lind. Even the veiled quality of the opening andante of the aria was like her—so suited to the prayer."

It was at the Birmingham Festival of 1882 that Gounod's "Redemption" was produced. This sacred work was composed expressly for the festival. The principal part was allotted to me, and the other parts to Madame Patey, Mr. Edward Lloyd, and Mr. Santley.

According to my usual custom, I was anxious to go through it with the composer, and therefore, after having studied it, I went to Paris to obtain M. Gounod's ideas as to how he wished it interpreted. He received me most kindly, and I sang the whole of my part to him. There is a high C at the end of the soprano solo "From Thy love as a Father," and when I came to it I sang it quite *piano*, as Gounod had not marked it or given any indication as to how it should be taken. He

CHARLES GOUNOD.

A ma chère et
grande interprète
Albani.
Son dévoué

Ch. Gounod

Birmingham. Festival
30 - 31 août
1er 7bre } 82.

was much pleased, and said, " I intended that to be *forte*, but I like your way best."

This great and lovely composition was splendidly prepared and extremely well performed, the efforts of all concerned resulting in a very great success. It was even performed twice during the week, an occurrence so rare that I never remember its happening but on two festival occasions. M. Gounod himself conducted, and had given the most valuable advice and bestowed every possible care at each rehearsal on the execution of the work.

Following on the Birmingham Festival the " Redemption " was given repeatedly ; at the Albert Hall, St. James's Hall, and the Crystal Palace, I sang the soprano part I had created at Birmingham, and always to crowded houses.

After the Birmingham Festival of 1876 I sang the following month at the Leeds Festival. It was here four years later, in 1880, that I first met Sir Arthur (then Mr.) Sullivan, who was the conductor that year for the first time at this festival. The great event here was the production of his " Martyr of Antioch," in which fine work I created the soprano part.

Sir Arthur Sullivan's was a personality which appealed to all who knew him both

professionally and privately. His musical talent was great and varied, and his melodies were lovely ; he was a master of composition, and had his health allowed he would probably have produced even finer works than those we in England know so well. He was one of the kindest-hearted men I ever knew, and charitable in numberless ways of which no one ever heard from himself ; a true friend, a straightforward man in all his dealings, and, notwithstanding his musical imagination, extremely businesslike. After every festival he would invariably come and thank me personally for all I had done, and with his orchestras would always frankly praise those who deserved it, although at rehearsals he never passed over a fault.

In the busy professional life we all have to lead in London, it is rarely possible to meet our friends as often as we may wish, but I remember one occasion on which Sir Arthur Sullivan, having heard that my little boy had been ill, came to inquire after him. I was at home and able to say the child was nearly well, but not yet downstairs. Sir Arthur said, " May I go up and see him ? " and when told he was having his tea, he said, " Oh, do let us all go and have nursery tea ! "

So we adjourned to the nursery, and Sir Arthur Sullivan then produced a beautiful fluffy white rabbit, which walked and jumped and sat up, to my child's extreme delight. We all ate sugared bread and butter, and for a long time afterwards my boy always called Sir Arthur "the White Rabbit," by which name he became actually known in the house! To those who remember his dark hair and eyes, the "sobriquet" is amusingly incongruous!

After the Leeds Festival in 1880 I sang during the autumn at various concerts in the large provincial towns, besides on an organised concert tour of my own. This entailed a good deal of hard work and considerable exertion, but I have happily always been strong and had a good constitution. By arranging my work beforehand and resting, with reasonable exercise and fresh air, in the intervals of all my performances, I have succeeded in accomplishing a large amount of hard and constant work fairly easily, and above all in being able to fulfil all my engagements without, except on one or two inevitable occasions, ever disappointing my public. I have made it a rule, whenever possible, never to sing on two consecutive days, and when

engaged to sing in the country to go down the day before, so as to come on to the platform as rested and fresh as possible. I considered this to be a duty to my public as well as to myself.

My first appearance at a Handel Festival was in 1877. The size of the Crystal Palace and the immense volume of sound produced by between three thousand and four thousand executants in band and chorus are most impressive, and I had a very natural doubt as to whether my voice could be heard under such conditions. However, I was told afterwards that it had penetrated into every part, and that even the softest notes in "Angels, ever bright and fair," had been heard with absolute distinctness by an audience of more than twenty-one thousand people. I sang in the "Messiah," and at the rehearsal and miscellaneous concert.

The Gloucester Musical Festival took place in September of this year (1877), and I was engaged together with Madame Titiens. Unhappily the illness which subsequently caused her death was then coming on, and when the time came she was too ill to appear. Under these sad circumstances the principal work of the festival fell to my share, and I sang

HANDEL FESTIVAL ORCHESTRA.

in "Elijah," the "Messiah," and the "Creation," besides taking the principal part in the miscellaneous concert.

At this festival Mr. (now Sir Charles) Santley was the exponent of all the principal baritone parts, and I cannot sufficiently express the admiration I have always had for this artiste. He is such a thorough and conscientious singer, with such splendid natural gifts which he has developed by genuine hard study in the right way. It is a real lesson for any one to listen to his delivery of any variety of music, and only a few years ago I heard him sing Mozart's air "Non piu Andrai," from "Le Nozze di Figaro," with a perfection of vocalisation and a clearness of pronunciation which cannot be surpassed.

In 1880 Mr. Joseph Maas was the first tenor at the Gloucester Festival. He possessed a splendid voice and was an admirable oratorio singer. He occupied one of the first positions in this country, but unhappily succumbed to a severe illness and died while still in possession of all his powers.

The festivals of Gloucester, Worcester, and Hereford are called "The Festivals of the Three Choirs," because, when they were instituted more than a hundred and fifty

years ago, they consisted only of the three choirs meeting together, annually at each town in turn, and holding a musical festival. Gradually this became enlarged, and for many years past a large London orchestra and three hundred to four hundred chorus (nearly all amateurs) have been collected together, and the best oratorio soloists engaged.

These festivals are, socially, most agreeable functions. They take place in September, one of the months most favoured by the English climate. The principal inhabitants in the town are exceedingly hospitable, and county families fill their houses for the week and bring large parties to the cathedral. Everybody seems to know everybody else, all the cathedral authorities keep open houses, and the town is gay with ladies' light dresses and the flags and decorations with which the townspeople celebrate their festival so long as it lasts.

At all these festivals I have met many interesting people, and have made many lasting friendships.

In 1882, at the beginning of September, the Preston Guilds Festival took place. This festival only comes once every twenty years,

and therefore there are not many artistes who take part in it a second time. Mr. Santley, however, who was singing, had also sung at the previous one in 1862. Besides several music performances after the style of the other great festivals, processions of the different guilds take place through the town, dinners and balls are held, and for four days Preston is given to holiday-making and pleasure, anything like work or business being at a discount. I must own that the processions with allegorical cars, bands of music (some of them pretty bad) had a greater attraction for the general public than the performance of an oratorio, and consequently the attendance at one or two of our concerts was not so large as it might have been. Five concerts were given during the four days with an excellent band and chorus, Sir Charles (then Mr.) Hallé being the conductor.

CHAPTER IX

SOME CONTINENTAL ENGAGEMENTS

For the second season in succession I was engaged in Paris and made my *rentrée* on January 16, 1878. A telegram to a London paper said, "Mlle. Albani made a triumphant reappearance last night at the Italian Opera in 'Lucia.'" I sang in the "Sonnambula" and "Rigoletto," and also added an important rôle to my répertoire, that of Violetta in Verdi's "La Traviata."

This opera may of late years have lost a good deal of its popularity owing to the increased taste for Wagner and other more complicated music, but at the time of which I speak it was one of the most popular operas with nearly all European audiences, and had always been sung by the first artistes, such as Madame Nilsson, Madame Patti, and many others.

Its lovely expressive melodies, and the scope given for the dramatic rendering of

both words and music, all made me wish to sing it, and I was rewarded for the not inconsiderable time and study I devoted to it by the success I achieved in the part.

With me were associated M. Capoul, as Alfred, and Signor Pandolfini, as Germont, both of whom were immense favourites at that time in Paris.

So great was the enthusiasm for "La Traviata" that it is said as much as eighty francs each was paid for stalls to witness the second performance. I was also told the following little anecdote, for the truth of which, however, I cannot vouch.

"Allez-vous ce soir chez la Baronne de B——?" asked a young Frenchman of his friend.

"Non, non, non, mon ami," was the reply; "je suis Albanisé, je vais encore aux 'Italiens.'"

On looking back to the criticisms on my performances I can hardly believe I could have deserved all that was so enthusiastically said of me. I had not only comparisons with my musical predecessors to encounter, but also all the traditions of the part in the original play by Alexandre Dumas fils, which had been interpreted in turn by almost all

the great and celebrated actresses of the French stage—no slight consideration in the case of so histrionic a nationality as the French.

Another production was that of "Alma," by Victor Massé, in which I sang, and also M. Capoul. The opera had a considerable success, but not one which has continued.

At a performance of "Rigoletto" a very great and charming compliment was paid to me by the young American art students in Paris. I had noticed that night a number of eager and appreciative faces in a box close to the stage, and these were the students who had taken that box so that from it they could hand me personally the present to which they had all contributed. I had no idea what was in store for me, but at the end of the opera they leant forward and gave me an enormous basket full of flowers, beneath which lay a large album they had prepared, containing an original sketch done by each one of them expressly for me. It will be seen how thoroughly the promise that many of the drawings then foreshadowed has been fulfilled, when I mention the names of Sargent, Lowe, Bridgeman, as being among those whose youthful sketches I am now so proud to possess.

Les extrêmes se touchent, and from this most pleasing episode I turn to one which certainly is the "reverse of the picture." One day a man called at my hotel in Paris with a letter purporting to be written to me by M. de Villemessant, the then editor of the *Figaro* newspaper, upon the strength of which he induced me to give him 500 francs. Upon inquiry I found that the letter was a forgery, but, alas! too late, as the man was gone, and my £20 also. I fancy the thief was afterwards caught and punished, but I never saw my money again.

I have often heard it said that artistes are looked on as "targets" for collectors for charities, and other people of more questionable character, to shoot at! However that may be, I can truly say I am no exception to the rule, for, glad, and often thankful, as I am for the capacity which enables me to help those who are in real need, it is a fact that had I at first, and were I now, to try to accede to one-quarter of the charitable applications I receive, I should have no time whatever left to fulfil any of my duties. Many charitable requests I have to refuse with sincere regret, but many are unnecessary and should never have been made.

I sang at a great charity performance in Paris during this winter, and towards the end of the season in " Linda di Chamounix." For my benefit and last appearance I sang in " I Puritani " ; when, to quote from a Paris correspondent to an English paper, " at the fall of the curtain there took place a scene which I have rarely seen paralleled. Mlle. Albani was literally overwhelmed with gigantic bouquets of the choicest flowers ; nor were jewel-cases even wanting."

One of the principal events of the Covent Garden season of this year, so far as I was concerned, was the production of Victor Massé's " Paul et Virginie." I sang in it with M. Capoul, who had created the part of Paul in Paris. It is a beautiful work and pleased very much when first given, but it was not sufficiently successful to attain to a lasting popularity, and consequently has not since been heard so often as I cannot help thinking it deserves. I also sang in " Mignon " this season, in addition to all my former operas.

During my first seasons in London it was the custom for important concerts to be given in private houses. These concerts were very numerous, and were given at the houses of the aristocracy and at those of owners rich

enough to engage the first artistes. Sir Julius Benedict was well known in London society, and was the chief organiser of these musical entertainments.

I was engaged to sing at most of the principal concerts, and met many remarkable people and made many and lasting friendships. Among them was the late Lord Lathom, so well known as a lover of music, and in after-days as the chairman of the Italian Opera Company at Covent Garden. He was then also Lord Chamberlain to Queen Victoria, and with both him and Lady Lathom I contracted a warm friendship, often staying with them at Lathom, their fine and historical house in Lancashire.

In the autumn of this year—on August 6, 1878—I married Mr. Ernest Gye, the eldest son of Mr. Frederick Gye, who, with all his family, had received me with the truest friendship ever since my arrival in England.

In the early days of November my husband and I went to spend a few days at Waldleiningen, the lovely Scloss of the late Prince of Leiningen in Germany. The Prince was an old friend of my husband's family, and remained a true and sincere friend of ours also to the day of his death in 1904. The

Princess of Leiningen was then alive, one of the most charming and accomplished, as she had been one of the most beautiful, princesses of her time.

My father-in-law had already arrived, for he had been an ardent sportsman and excellent shot, and for years had been invited by the Prince for the wild-boar shooting in November. How little could I dream, the morning we left Waldleiningen for Moscow, that it would be the last time I should ever see him! The news of his terrible shooting accident and death reached us in the early days of December in Moscow, where I had begun to fulfil my engagement, and my husband was obliged to leave me, but he was not in time to see his father alive. The accident happened at the house of his old and most kind friend (Theodore) Viscount Dillon, the wound was too severe for him to be moved, and he succumbed to it after a week of severe suffering; as one of the surgeons said, "a splendid constitution fighting against a terrible wound."

We had a long and tedious journey to Moscow, for neither the train service nor the sleeping-accommodation was then what it is now. We slept one night at Warsaw, seeing what we could of the city, and then

went on again through many miles of dreary country, the train stopping at nearly every station, and passengers getting out to smoke cigarettes and drink weak tea.

We arrived in Moscow and I sang my usual répertoire, receiving a warm welcome from my kind Russian audiences. I had the advantage of hearing, and singing with, Signor Masini, the principal tenor of this Russian season. He had a rich and fine Italian voice, and was a master of his art. From what I have so often been told of the voice and singing of Signor Mario, I should think that Signor Masini was very much like him both in style and temperament. I believe I am right in saying that he sang very little, if at all, in London, but he was a great favourite in Italy and Russia, and he sang in several operas with me. Signor Cotogni was also in the troupe—a more than excellent artiste, both as a singer and actor, and a very nice and most amiable gentleman. He was for many years at Covent Garden and was much liked, both in the theatre and out of it.

In St. Petersburg during this winter I sang at the marriage of the Grand Duchess Anastasie, daughter of the Grand Duke Michael

of Russia, to the Grand Duke Frédéric François III. of Mecklenburg-Schwerin, and it was again the occasion of the same great court ceremonies as those at the marriage of H.S.H. the Duchess of Edinburgh, afterwards Duchess of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha.

In addition to those operas I had before sung in Russia, were added "Tannhäuser" and "La Traviata"—surely the alpha and omega of music—both of which pleased the public greatly.

I took no part in the opera season of 1879, and my son was born on June 4 of that year. During the morning after his birth the news arrived at the Opera House just as an orchestra rehearsal was going on. The band stopped, and immediately struck up "See, the Conquering Hero comes." When I was told of it, I gratefully hoped that their kindly action might prove to be an omen that my baby might in the future become a good man as well as a "conquering hero."

After singing at the Hereford and Bristol Festivals, I went in November 1879 to Florence, and was not only delighted to return to a city where I had been so warmly appreciated, but I was touched to find that the Florentines had no more forgotten me than I had them,

and I met with an enthusiastic reception, singing in "Lucia," "Rigoletto," "Faust," and other operas.

In Italy, however, there is never the constant change of opera as in London. In any Italian city an opera that pleases the public may be given twelve or fifteen times running, and even a favourite artiste may repeat an impersonation over and over again in an opera which in itself is not looked upon with a particularly favourable eye, the Italian public putting up with the opera for the sake of the artiste. Of course this has occasionally its difficult side: for instance, a manager will often open his season with only one opera, and the artistes needed for it, and consequently should the opera not be a success, or one of the principal artistes not please, he has to shut the theatre until he can prepare some other performance.

The Italian public is very critical, and differs from those of most other countries, for where colder audiences would content themselves with either going to the theatre if satisfied, or staying away if not amused, the warm Italian temperament seems to force its owners to take the question as personal to itself. Consequently, the Italians, all over

Italy, will go to the theatre all the same, to testify their pleasure or displeasure, as the case may be. Happily they all know how to demonstrate their pleasure and admiration in a manner which is apt to be overwhelming, and scenes of enthusiasm arise which one can never forget.

In January 1880 I went to Nice, and was the grateful recipient of the hearty approval of perhaps the most cosmopolitan audiences in Europe, Nice during the winter months being filled with visitors of almost every nationality.

From the Riviera I went to Brussels to sing at the Théâtre de la Monnaie. The Belgian public and I had not yet had an opportunity of becoming acquainted, and I knew how musical a public it was, how talented the professors of the Brussels Conservatoire, and how high its musical reputation, and therefore, though my name was known in Brussels, I came on the stage feeling a little apprehensive, a sensation which was not moderated by the fact that I was received in dead silence. However, something seemed to tell me that my audience wished to listen and judge for themselves, and I appreciated their idea. I felt fully compensated for my

previous nervousness by the warm applause which greeted me at the end of the evening, an applause given with that sincerity which is as lasting as it is voluble. For on the many occasions on which I have since sung there the Belgians have always appeared to be as glad to see me as I have been to find myself again amongst them.

The directors of "La Monnaie" at that time were MM. Stoumou and Calabresi, and excellent directors they were. The operas were exceedingly well put on; there was good discipline throughout; and altogether it was a pleasure to be connected with this management. Several of the artistes were quite young, but were well chosen, and the operas were much more artistically sung than in many more important theatres. The operas were given in French, but as I had studied all the parts in Italian, I sang them in that language. Among the younger débutantes of that season was Mlle. Rose Caron, who then showed the promise which was afterwards to be realised, becoming as she did so talented and dramatic a soprano and actress.

During this season in Brussels I had the honour of being received by the Queen of the Belgians. She was a clever harpist, de-

voted to music, and she almost always came to the opera when I sang. On one occasion, when she had specially commanded one act of an opera she particularly wished to hear, Her Majesty graciously invited me to her own box so that I should hear it also, and she presented me with her portrait and autograph. I do not remember ever having been presented to the King, who was understood to care very little for music and very seldom came to the operas.

I made my reappearance in 1880 at Covent Garden, and was both touched and proud at the warm welcome accorded me, for the English public greeted me as a friend. I sang in "Rigoletto" on this occasion with Signor Marini, Madame Scalchi, and a new baritone, Signor St. Athos. Later on I sang in "Faust," "Lucia," and "Lohengrin."

The *Daily Telegraph* in its criticism the next morning was kind enough to say:

"The promised return of Madame Albani to the Covent Garden stage was taken advantage of by her many admirers for the purpose of an enthusiastic demonstration. . . . An artist who maintains the dignity of her profession in public, and in private reflects upon it the lustre of a blameless life,

is never unappreciated by those whose goodwill is most worth having. Both as an artist and as a woman, therefore, Madame Albani was fêted on Saturday night; the applause rang through the theatre when she stepped upon the stage, giving her more emphatically than words could convey the assurance that she stood in the presence, not only of admirers, but of friends."

After taking part in the festivals in the autumn, I returned to Belgium in the beginning of 1881, to give performances in several towns, though principally in Brussels, singing in "Lucia," "Rigoletto," "Mignon," and other operas, all in Italian, which necessitated my knowing the words very perfectly, for the prompters were always French (the operas being given in French), and therefore they could give me no assistance.

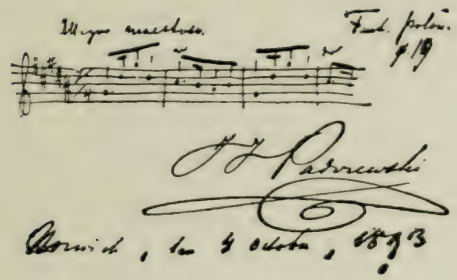
While I was in Belgium this winter some very serious floods had taken place, entailing considerable loss of life and property, and as some small return for the great kindness with which the Belgian public had received me, I gladly offered to give a performance for the benefit of the sufferers. "Rigoletto" was chosen, and given under Royal patronage, Her Majesty the Queen of the Belgians being

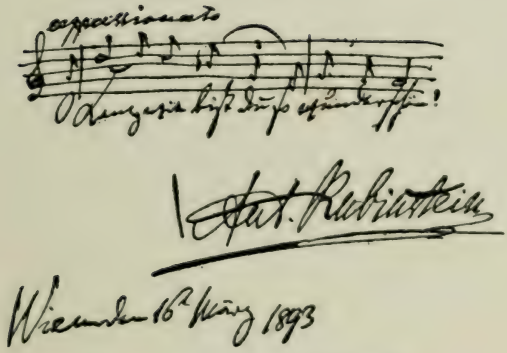
present. I was enabled, to my great delight, to hand over to the committee my share of the receipts, 5,450 francs. In acknowledgment of this assistance the Burgomaster came on to the stage at the end of the opera, presented me with a laurel wreath made of gold and silver, and thanked me before the whole audience, which filled the theatre to overflowing.

During the opera season of 1881 I made my *rentrée* at Covent Garden in "Rigoletto," afterwards singing in "Faust," "Lucia," "Lohengrin," the "Puritani," etc.; and for this season M. Dupont from the Théâtre de la Monnaie, Brussels, and Signor Beviguani, were the principal *chefs d'orchestre.*

A concert tour in England, Ireland, and Scotland, together with festival work, filled up the rest of the autumn and immediately after Christmas I went to Berlin to fulfil an engagement at the Royal Opera.

Anton Rubinstein





TWO MUSICAL AUTOGRAPHS

CHAPTER X

"LOHENGRIN" IN BERLIN

I HAD had a great wish to sing "Lohengrin" in Berlin, but knew that if I did so it must be in German. Accordingly I took advantage of a little spare time, went to Germany, and restudied the whole part in German. When I arrived in Berlin, therefore, I was ready with two or three operas in Italian and "Lohengrin" in German.

It might have been thought a risky adventure to sing an opera for the first time in my life in German before the Germans, but I am happy to think that the result justified the hard work I had gone through and the courage I had summoned to my aid, for this was one of the most important events of my career. Some of the critics were kind enough to call it a "triumph."

The late Emperor William I. was present, with the Empress, and many members of their Court. The Emperor was pleased to

summon me to the Royal box after the second act, when he complimented me most graciously, and bestowed on me the title of "Hofkammersängerin" (Royal Court Singer). In spite of the deep feeling of gratification this caused me, my natural nervousness, inseparable from the ordeal of a first appearance before a German audience in a German opera, was increased rather than allayed. I had to appear in my costume as Elsa before their Majesties and their Court in the Royal box, and in face of an audience which, on that night, filled the opera house from floor to ceiling.

I had been recalled before the curtain five or six times, and my fellow-artistes were also most kind and cordial to me; they complimented me very much, and were almost as pleased as I was myself.

This evening was at once a great and most pleasurable event for me, and it was also an exceptional occasion for the theatre, as it was one of the last appearances of Herr Niemann, the great German tenor, who sang the part of Lohengrin magnificently and looked it to perfection. Fräulein Brandt was the Ortrud, and Herr Betz, an old favourite of the Berliners, was Telramund.

I am sincerely averse to quoting from

newspaper articles, but upon this, for me, very special occasion, I hope I may be forgiven, and that my readers will remember that I was a stranger and an interloper in the musical life of Berlin, and that therefore there can be no idea of favouritism in the criticism which appeared in the Berlin papers.

The Berlin *Zeitung* wrote :

" It may certainly be denominated an important event in the domain of dramatic vocal art that an artist like Madame Albani, who was brought up to the use of the French language, first embodies before the Berlin public, with a perfection all her own, various creations—musically never to be forgotten—by means of the Italian idiom ; and finally in German opera, and in the German tongue, conjures up the most poetical, but likewise most difficult, character of Elsa in ' Lohengrin,' with such consummate mastery that the audience are aroused by her to enthusiasm."

A telegram from the Berlin correspondent of the *Times* ran as follows :

" Madame Albani appeared to-night as Elsa in Wagner's ' Lohengrin,' singing her part in the native German. The house was crowded to the very ceiling, and extravagant prices were paid for seats. The Emperor and his

Court were present, and all the leaders of Berlin society. Madame Albani achieved what may well be called a complete triumph, greater even than any she has won hitherto. After the first and second acts she was recalled thrice, and when the curtain finally dropped, four times, the audience cheering enthusiastically."

That I returned to my hotel both thankful and most happy I need hardly add, and I was able to celebrate my first performance of "Lohengrin" in German by placing my night's salary in the hands of the Emperor for charitable purposes.

And here I may recount a touching incident which evidences the gracious kindness and thoughtfulness of our late beloved Queen Victoria. My husband and I were dining at the Austrian Embassy, and next to me at table was a gentleman attached to the household of the Empress Frederick (then Crown Princess). He turned to me and said, "The Princess knew that I should meet you this evening, and she told me to give you this." He handed me a telegram, which I found to be from our late Queen to Her Royal Highness, and which ran as follows:

"Am anxious to recommend Madame Albani

to you. She is my Canadian subject, an excellent person, known to me, a splendid artiste, and I take much interest in her.

"THE QUEEN."

I could hardly speak for pleasure, for I had no idea the Queen was aware of my being in Berlin or having intended to go there, but I managed to say, "Pray tell the Princess that I shall keep and treasure this."

Of those also of whose great kindness I would speak is the Crown Princess (afterwards Empress Frederick), who sent for me and received my husband and myself most kindly, showing us a phonograph, an instrument then only lately invented, in which Her Royal Highness said she had heard me sing. Two of the Princesses, her daughters, were present, and we were received with the simple and natural kindness for which the members of our Royal Family are proverbial. To the Crown Prince I had the honour of being presented at one of the Court concerts at which I sang.

And of the kindness of Lord Ampthill, then Lord Odo Russell, whose distinguished diplomatic career had shortly before led to his appointment as British Ambassador in

Berlin, it would be impossible to speak too gratefully. Both he and Lady Ampthill were most cordial to my husband and myself, and it was at once a personal and an intellectual pleasure to find oneself in the home-like but highly cultivated society of them both. Lady Ampthill was a daughter of the late Lord Clarendon, and both by nature and tradition had inherited from her father the attractiveness and diplomatic amiability for which he was renowned.

Lord Ampthill was one of the kindest-hearted as well as one of the most intellectual people I have ever known. A " gentleman " in the most complete sense of the word, he was also a perfect linguist, a musician of considerable attainments, a *litérateur* of widely read and liberal views, and a man the charm of whose manner and expression fascinated all who came in contact with him. My remembrance of this friendship will remain with me always, mingled with a deep regret for his loss.

At this time the Empress Augusta was already an invalid and able to do very little socially, but she used to come to the opera wheeled in her chair along the private corridor of the palace which communicated with the

Royal box, and she would remain for an act, or more, as her health might permit. Her Majesty sent for me to sing to her at the palace, and I arrived feeling very nervous and rather tired, as I had sung "Faust" the night before. I was met by an old lady-in-waiting, to whom I explained this and added that I hoped my voice would not sound tired. The old lady only looked at me and said, "Oh! don't be so vain!" which made me feel more nervous than before. I was then ushered into the presence of the Empress Augusta, who was reclining in her chair, most beautifully dressed, I remember, in a deep red velvet and silk gown, but pale, very thin, and looking ill, the bright intelligence of her eyes, however, preserving the natural vivacity of her expression.

Her Majesty received me most graciously, and I sang for her "Qui la voce," "Pur Dicesti," and "Robin Adair." She made me sit by her and entered into conversation, speaking of our own Queen, for whom she had a profound admiration and respect, and whose photograph she sent me to see in the next room. Her lady-in-waiting was also desired to show me a large blue-and-gold vase from the Royal Manufactory at Berlin, of which

the Empress was making me a present, and Her Majesty said, "You must notice the picture on it of the palace; the windows of this red drawing-room are those in the corner, and," she added, "I shall always remember hearing you sing, and also Sarasate play, in this room."

Before I left Berlin the Empress Augusta sent for me to say good-bye, and on this occasion she received me entirely alone, and said that the Emperor also intended coming in to see me. In a short time the door opened and His Majesty entered the room. He was looking thin and pale, and the Empress said to him, "Have you been out?" "Yes, I have," he replied. "But did not the doctors forbid you to go?" "Yes, they did, but I went all the same," and he took a chair on my other side, so that I was seated between this great Emperor and Empress, who, in their Royal simplicity, were as friendly, kind, and natural in their conversation with me as the most unsophisticated of human beings. I remember how pleased the Empress was to hear that I always read the *Revue des deux Mondes*, for she was familiar with all the best authors and books of the day, as well as with most current subjects.

MADAME ALBANI'S DECORATIONS.

The Emperor gave me his large Jubilee medal, which was struck to commemorate the eightieth year of his military service, and also his photograph signed and framed, and both he and the Empress shook me warmly by the hand in expressing the great pleasure I had been able to give them, and in wishing me "good-bye" and "au revoir." The next morning a servant arrived from the palace at our hotel, carrying a large and beautiful china casket filled with the most lovely pink roses. The Empress had sent it to me as a present.

I afterwards sent a donation to the hospital in Berlin of which she was patroness, and received the following kind letter in return:

"BERLIN,
"8 *Janvier* 1884.

"MADAME ALBANI,

"Acceptez tous mes remercïments pour la généreuse contribution que vous venez d'offrir à l'hôpital qui porte mon nom. Cet acte de charité est digne de la grande artiste que nous voyons partir avec regret après l'avoir admirée comme l'interprète international de l'harmonie.

"AUGUSTA."

I left Berlin with the most grateful recollec-

tions of the high artistic appreciation so generously accorded to me by the Berlin critics and the public, and the warm welcome I had received from the Royal Family and from so many in society. I felt that I was leaving true friends behind me, and I can truly say that no one amongst them have I forgotten.

From Berlin we went home and very shortly on to Monte Carlo. The change from the winter weather in Berlin to the genial sunshine of the Riviera was a great one, for although the month was January, the flowers were already beginning to bloom, and the atmosphere was bright and comparatively quite warm. I sang in "Rigoletto" with Madame Scalchi, MM. Maurel and Gayarre, and then "Faust" with the same artistes and M. Faure. With M. Faure also I sang in "Hamlet."

The theatre was the one in the Casino, and conducted in a different manner from the more business-like method of most others, especially of that at Covent Garden. There were, for instance, no fixed opera nights, and consequently a performance was often not decided upon or announced until the day before. This was quite in keeping with the

place, which is one existing for pleasure only, but it is liable to be extremely inconvenient to those concerned with the theatre.

I am thankful to say a love of gambling is far from my nature, but there was always a fascination for me, whenever I went into the rooms, in the excitement of the play, and in watching the various types of humanity, so many of whom contrived to wear an impenetrable mask. With others the mask would involuntarily drop off under a sudden stroke of good or bad luck, and I have often felt a whole story was told to me in a glance. I used to wonder whether I had filled up the details of the story aright.

It was here that I first met Duke Ernest of Coburg, the brother of our own Prince Consort. He came to call on us, quite *sans cérémonie*, and was very kind and amiable. He was a lover of music and a composer himself. His opera " Santa Chiara " was once given at Covent Garden.

CHAPTER XI

MY RETURN TO CANADA

In the beginning of January 1883 my husband and I sailed for New York, as I had been engaged by Mr. Henry Mapleson for a winter season of Italian opera in the United States.

We left Liverpool in the *Pavonia*, and encountered such terrible weather that we were fourteen days at sea. Nearly every one was ill, and I myself was entirely *hors de combat*, unable to eat anything whatever, and only able to be carried up on deck the last two days. I was engaged to sing at the Symphony Society's Concert before beginning my opera engagement, and should have been at the rehearsal on the Friday, but our ship did not arrive until the rehearsal was over. However, though feeling weak and somewhat exhausted, as may be believed, I managed to sing on the following night, and succeeded in pleasing the New York critics.

I then immediately went to Albany. It

may be imagined with what emotion I again found myself amongst all my kindest old friends, to whose aid in my early struggles I owed in so great a measure the artistic position to which I had then succeeded in attaining. I was received as a dear friend by one and all, and when I arrived in the town late on the evening before my concert, a military band appeared before the hotel and gave me a serenade, commencing with "Home, Sweet Home." I may say that I was fairly besieged with visitors the next morning, but had to forgo and postpone the great pleasure of receiving them, as on a singing day I do not talk, but keep myself as quiet and fresh for my performance as I possibly can.

At night I found a packed audience at the music-hall, a decoration of plants, flags, and a large "Welcome." I sang "Costa Diva," "Home, Sweet Home," "Angels, ever bright and fair," "Oh! Luce di quest anima," and "Robin Adair" in an atmosphere of emotion which pervaded us all alike, and brought tears, though very happy ones, to many of our eyes.

A little verse that appeared at the time in the Albany *Sunday Press* is worth quoting here, if only for the rhyme to "Albani"!

How sweet in many a charming talk
Will be the story of the maiden
Who here pursued her simple walk
With genius, care, and music laden;
The little singer known to Bess,
And Belle, and Henriette, and Fanny,
Who blossomed here as LA JEUNESSE,
And bloomed in glory as ALBANI.

From Albany I went direct to Chicago, and made my début in "I Puritani," receiving an enthusiastic welcome. In the words of the *Inter-Ocean* newspaper, "The immense audience which was crowded in the hall from parquet to gallery, though cold and critical at first, were warmed up and roused to intense enthusiasm before the second act was completed, . . . and the triumph of the evening may be justly considered proof positive of Madame Albani's great powers, both as a singer and actress, and not as the tribute of old friends anxious for her success."

The opera company gave subsequent representations during the tour in Cincinnati, Toronto, Washington, Boston, Baltimore, New York, and Brooklyn, and for this *tournée* Madame Patti was also engaged.

At Toronto I overheard, much to my amusement, one of the stage carpenters say to another while I was being applauded and repeatedly called out, "Wall! I guess this

ain't like a stage play: it's like a political meetin'." And I am glad to say I had many a "political meetin'" during the whole tour.

Towards the end of the season arrangements were made for me to visit and give two concerts in Montreal, which might almost be called my native city, I having been born in a place only twelve miles from it.

When I left America to prosecute my studies in Europe, an effort had been made in Montreal to organise a concert or to get up a subscription to assist me to go abroad. The French-Canadians, however, had the old-world traditional misgiving of a public career, and especially that dislike for any one belonging to them to go on the stage itself, a feeling which was then very much still alive in Canada, although the idea was already beginning to die out in other countries. Consequently all help, as they then honestly thought in my best interests, was withheld from me in that quarter.

But by this time the whole aspect of the position had changed, and now that I had come through the "fiery furnace" of their solicitous imagination into the sunshine of warm appreciation and prosperity in the career I had succeeded in making for myself, they

felt so generously proud of me that they determined to make all the amends they thought might be due to show how completely they considered me one of themselves. A reception committee was appointed to receive and welcome me at the frontier, a special car being sent to bring me to Montreal.

On our arrival at Montreal station we found it so packed that we had actually to fight our way through the cheering crowd, who seemed reluctant to let us move on. A large number of the members of the Snow Shoe Clubs had come to meet us, and they lined the streets, lighted torches in hand, as in four-horse carriages, and preceded by a band, we went in slow procession to the Windsor Hotel. Before the hotel so dense a crowd of spectators had assembled that I had to be carried over the heads of the people into the building. I then received as many of my kind friends as I was able, but after the journey from Boston, and the great emotion of such an immense and unlooked-for reception as I had met with, supremely happy as I felt, I was almost exhausted.

The next day I was invited by the City Council to a reception in the council chamber at the Hotel de Ville, and I found the officials,

and a crowd of ladies and gentlemen, the principal residents of Montreal, assembled in the Town Hall, the galleries of which were also completely filled. I was placed on the Mayor's throne amidst almost deafening applause and welcoming cheers, and Alderman Rainville, stepping to the foot of the dais, read the address of welcome in French. This was the address which was given to me, and it is beautifully illuminated.

"À MADAME ALBANI GYE

"MADAME,—

"Lorsque l'enthousiasme vous accueillait partout sur les grandes scènes de l'Europe, nous vous donnions ici les applaudissements de nos cœurs, désespérant presque de jamais acclamer de nos bravos celle qui avait révélé au vieux continent que le talent artistique même le plus brillant peut fleurir même au milieu des nièges du Canada.

"Vous êtes revenue cependant apportant avec vous un nom qui appartient à l'univers, il est vrai, mais dont la gloire manque à l'orgueil des autres pays. Tout éblouis que nous sommes des succès de l'artiste nous n'oublions pas de nous incliner avec respect devant les vertus de la femme en qui s'affirme

hautement ces paroles du poète chantant les admirables prévoyances de la Divinité.

"Mais quand elle pétrit ses nobles créatures,
Elle qui voit la haut comme on voit ici-bas,
Elle sait des secrets qui les font assez pures
Pour que le monde ne les souille pas.

" Aussi ne sommes nous surpris de ce que vos destinées aient été unies à celles d'un homme digne par son intelligence et ses nobles qualités d'être l'époux d'Albani.

" Et comment ne pas se souvenir en cette circonstance de celui dont les soins paternels formèrent vos jeunes années, et déposirent dans votre âme ces germes féconds de l'art que d'autres ont conduits à leur riche maturité. C'est à ses sollicitudes et sa foi dans votre génie que les citoyens de Montréal doivent aujourd'hui l'honneur de dire à une grande artiste qui est une des leurs. Soyez la bienvenue ! Et laissez nous espérer que votre bonne étoile vous ramènera souvent au milieu de nous comme à une étape de prédilection où vous puissiez vous reposer de vos futurs triomphes.

" (*Signé*) J. L. BAUDRY,
" Maire.
" (*Signé*) SLACKMAYER,
" Greffier de la Cité.

" MONTRÉAL,
" 28 *Mars* 1883."

To this my husband replied for me in words of heartfelt gratitude from us both, and then M. Louis Fréchette, Poet Laureate of Canada, read the beautiful poem which follows, lines in which he was thought even then to have surpassed himself.

A MADAME ALBANI

(*EMMA LAJEUNESSE*)

A l'occasion de son passage à Montréal

Qui donc nous avait dit, ô notre artiste aimée !
Qu'en un morne dédain ton âme renfermée,
Gardait—fleuve songeant aux cailloux du ruisseau—
Des ronces du passé rancune à ton berceau ?

Comme un papillon d'or qui, dans son vol splendide,
Méprise désormais la pauvre chrysalide,
Qui donc nous avait dit—ô profanations !—
Qu'en traînée au courant de tant d'ovations,
Aux oublis généreux femme inaccoutumée,
Tu rêvais, au moment même où la renommée,
Du succès à ton front fixait l'astre éclatant,
A punir ton pays de ses froideurs d'antan ?

O sainteté de l'art, toujours, toujours niée !
Ceux-là, grande Albani, qui t'ont calomniée
N'avaient jamais compris ce que c'est que le cœur
Où le reflet d'en haut mit son cachet vainqueur !
Ceux qui parlaient ainsi de toi ne savaient guère
Combien l'artiste, plane au-dessus du vulgaire ;
Combien l'âme d'élite, être immatériel,
Qui se fait ici-bas l'écho des chants du ciel,

Trouve, bercée au vent, des saintes harmonies,
Peu de place en son sein, pour les acrimonies !
Ils ignoraient ceux-là—mais au fond c'est leur droit,
Qu'on n'est pas grande artiste avec un cœur étroit !

Lorsque, fouettant les airs de sa vaste envergure,
L'aigle au clair firmament monte et se transfigure,
En veut-il au vallon qui lui fut moins vermeil ?
Quand la goutte flottante aux rayons du soleil,
Monte en bruine rose au sommet de la nue,
En veut-elle au ruisseau de l'avoir méconnue ?
Non, non ! l'aigle qui vole ivre d'immensité
Après être allé boire aux urnes de clarté,
Revient sur le rocher rafraîchir son plumage,
Conservant dans son œil la flamboyante image,
Du globe incandescent que lui seul peut fixer !
Quant à la perle humide, elle va se bercer
Et se dissoudre aux cieux en vapeur irisée,
Puis retombe ici-bas, fécondante rosée,
Pour aller resplendir en goutte de cristal
Sur la fleur qui se mire au doux ruisseau natal !

Tu sembles l'un et l'autre, ô diva ! D'un coup d'aile
Comme l'aigle au vieux roc resté toujours fidèle,
Comme la goutte d'eau qui retrouve son cours,
Pour donner à nos vœux quelques instants trop courts,
Tu redescends enfin de la sphère infinie
Où le soleil de l'art a sacré ton génie ;
Tu quittes l'empyrée, où ton vol radieux
Semait aux quatre vents tes chants mélodieux !
Tu dis : Trève aux rappels des brillants auditoires !
Aux bouquets ! aux bravos ! trève à toutes les gloires!
O mon pays—adieu, rives au ciel doré !—
Je tombe à deux genoux sur ton seuil adoré,

A moi tous les trésors de ta grande nature !
A moi le fleuve altier qui te sert de ceinture !
Tes cités, tes forêts, tes monts au front hautain,
Le blanc clocher, là bas, qui luit dans le lointain !
Chambly ! le vieux couvent ! Que je vous reconnaisse,
Théâtre inoublié de mes jours de jeunesse ? . . .

Voilà ce que tu dis en touchant notre sol,
Aigle sublime . . . non !—céleste rossignol !
Oui, nous l'avons appris—et, dans notre âme émue,
A ton nom, depuis lors, chaque fibre remue—
Quand l'Europe artistique, enchaînée à ta voix,
Te hissait jeune encor sur l'immortel pavois ;
Quand, d'Italie en France, et de Londres à Bruxelles,
Les acclamations folles, universelles,
Que soulevaient tes pas, montaient, ô notre enfant !
Delirantes clameurs, à ton char triomphant ;
Quand enfin, répété, par la foule qui gronde,
Ton nom frappait l'écho des grands centres du monde.
Pour de là se répandre et retentir partout,
Fidèle au vieux foyer, patriote avant tout,
Des souvenirs d'enfance inflexible gardienne,
L'universe à tes pieds, tu restas Canadienne !

Merci, chère Albani, merci ! Si notre main
N'a pas toujours battu si fort sur ton chemin ;
Si notre enthousiasme, ignorant trop encore,
N'a pas comme il devait salué ton aurore ;
Si nous n'avons pas su découvrir sur ton front
Ta future couronne à ton premier fleuron ;
Si ton aube a pâli par notre indifférence,
Oh ! tu te venges bien, grande âme ! et ta vengeance
Eclate aux yeux de tous, sans fiel et sans rancœur,
Belle comme ta voix, noble comme ton cœur !

Eh bien, soit ! ton pays est debout qui t'acclame !
Ton amour, il le veut ; ta gloire, il la réclame !
Il eût voulu t'offrir un diadème d'or,
Si son orgueil de père eût cru trouver encor,
Au milieu des joyaux sans prix dont tu rayonnes,
Sur ta tête d'enfant place pour des couronnes !

N'importe, avec l'aveu de nos torts expiés,
Laisse-nous, Albani, déposer à tes pieds
Toutes nos amitiés qui, ce soir, n'en font qu'une !
On t'a donné là-bas la gloire et la fortune ;
Ton pays, fier de toi, vient t'offrir à son tour
Son plus fervent hommage et son plus tendre amour.

LOUIS FRÉCHETTE.

I remained on the dais standing for more than two hours, and shaking hands with more than two thousand people, all the kind and notable inhabitants of Montreal who in the goodness of their hearts had come to welcome me. The afternoon was like a holiday, shops were closed, crowds were in the streets, and we were cheered all the way back as we returned from the Hôtel de Ville to our hotel, until I began to think that after such a commotion and emotion I should never be able to sing another note! It was a most wonderful, stirring, and touching reception, and one which even to the smallest detail I can never forget.

At my first concert the same warm reception

was accorded me, and I hope I may be pardoned if I quote a few lines from a criticism which faithfully rendered an account of the evening, and the extreme kindness of my "compatriotes."

"The audience in the Queen's Hall last evening was quite beside itself. . . . There was not a vacant seat in the choral gallery, many stood; the platform was crowded; the main body of the hall crowded to excess right back to the rear and sides, which were lined by rows of persons on their feet; the rear gallery could hardly have been made to contain one more without the aid of hydraulic pressure. . . . And this enthusiasm was justified, simply by the desire to do honour to a lady who began here a musical career that was not to end before she had advanced to the very first place in her royal art. . . . Had her singing been mediocre, she would have been received with pleasure, but it was not of that class. To most of those present it was a revelation. A voice of exquisite sweetness and wonderful power, compass, and freedom, aided by an art so great that it concealed every evidence of itself, filled the room and enthralled those who heard it. Before the last notes had ended a roar of

applause rose up from the great audience in every part of the building. . . . She sang 'Ardon gl' incensi' from 'Lucia,' and 'Angels, ever bright and fair,' which showed her great powers in oratorio; and this was greeted as the previous 'effort,' if the rippling of a voice as free as the flow of the waters of the pebbly brook can be called an effort, and returning, she sang as an encore 'Oh! Luce di quest anima.' But the crowning item of the evening was when she sang the French song, 'Souvenir du jeune âge.' When it was ended, to the shouts and clappings and other tokens of applause was added the waving of handkerchiefs; the stage and whole building was a mass of moving whiteness. She vainly endeavoured to quell the disturbance by singing 'Robin Adair,' with about the same success that fire is extinguished by the application of fresh coal. As soon as it was over the audience was literally on its feet, and then came 'Home, Sweet Home,' sung with a pathos which went to every heart."

This was indeed an evening which I can never forget, and that must be my apology for quoting the above. When I was encored after the Mad Scene of "Lucia," I wondered what I could sing which would please them all

best, and remembered the old French melody which I had just been singing during the season at Covent Garden, in Hérold's "Pré aux Clercs," and which had the touching and, for this moment, the most appropriate of words.

It was an inspiration, and made so deep an impression that when I came to the last words, "Rendez moi ma patrie ou laissez moi mourir," the whole public rose and cheered me for fully five minutes, and I had to repeat it before I sang "Home, Sweet Home." That the impression it created was not only deep, but lasting, is proved by the fact that the song was immediately re-published with my portrait on it, and has become a national as well as popular song ever since, and is even now to be found in nearly every cottage throughout Canada.

Montreal was all *en fête* while I was there, and though I could be spared from the opera for only one week, I found time to pay a visit to my old convent and to go and see some of my relations. At the Convent of the Sacred Heart I was received with the most affectionate of welcomes, the very rare exception being vouchsafed to me that my husband was admitted also. We were re-

ceived at the door by the Rev. Sister Caise, Superioress, and the Rev. Sister de Ventini, both of whom had taught me, also Madame Taillon and Madame Bienvenu. The pupils were all assembled in the large reception-hall, in the centre of which was suspended in large letters, " Bienvenue à l'Albani." I sang an " Ave Maria " in the old chapel of the convent where, as a child, I had so often sung before, little dreaming of the circumstances under which I should come back in later years.

CHAPTER XII

FIVE YEARS OF MY LIFE

In the autumn of 1883, through the great kindness of the Lord Fife, we spent our holiday at Old Mar Lodge in the beautiful valley of the Dee. At that time we were not even acquainted with Lord Fife and knew nothing of Deeside, but, happening to mention to a mutual friend that we had been making inquiries about a small house in Braemar, but had failed to find one, we heard from him a few days later that Lord Fife offered us Old Mar Lodge for the autumn. I cannot describe the beauty of that country, nor the delightful and healthful change it was after the hard work and the turmoil of a London season. We were all so delighted with the place that Lord Fife told me "always to come there when we wanted a holiday," and we did take advantage of his kindness for several seasons. He also told us to fish in the whole of his part of the river as much

as we pleased, and this added very much to the enjoyment of our stay. One year—shall I ever forget it ?—I actually caught a salmon !

Old Mar Lodge was one of the shooting-lodges in Mar Forest, twenty-one miles up Deeside from Ballater and thirteen from Balmoral. There we spent two months in a beautiful country and with health-giving air. We soon got to love the place and regret having ever had to leave it. Being in her neighbourhood, it was not long before the Queen sent for me to come and sing for her at Balmoral, which I did one afternoon. The next year I was sent for again to sing, and when I had finished, the Queen asked me about Old Mar Lodge. I gave her some particulars, and then plucking up my courage I said, " Would not your Majesty come and see it ? " To my great astonishment and delight the Queen said, " Well, I think I will."

Two or three days after this I received a telegram in the morning to warn me that Her Majesty would honour me with a call that afternoon, and would arrive at 4.30. Naturally we were thrown into a state of excitement and anxiety to get all in order. Luckily there was the wherewithal to prepare

a fairly good tea, and at 4.25—Her Majesty was always punctuality itself—we saw the carriage approaching. The Queen's kindness and thoughtfulness soon put us at our ease. I sang a little song before she left, and a very memorable incident in my life was over.

After this Her Majesty honoured me with a visit every year, and I went to sing at Balmoral at least twice every season. On these occasions the party was very small. Besides the Queen and myself there would be only a lady-in-waiting, and perhaps a member of the Royal Family who happened to be staying at the castle.

A contretemps happened one day. I sat down at the piano to accompany myself, when, alas ! one of the legs of the stool broke and I rolled upon the ground at the Queen's feet. She was much concerned in case I had hurt myself, but my stage experience has taught me to tumble about without harm. When it was seen that all was right with me, the Queen laughed heartily and a fresh stool was sent for.

On the occasion of one of the first visits of Queen Victoria to me at Old Mar Lodge, my boy, then about seven years old, was present. He was very quiet and behaved

extremely well all the time. When Her Majesty left, we were all at the door to see her off, and when the carriage had nearly got out of sight he remarked, "Oh, mummy, what a little woman for such a big Queen!"

We had a favourite fox-terrier with us in Scotland, and this dog did not like large pieces of cake or biscuit being given her. She would put them down and wait for you to break them into small fragments. The Queen always took notice of "Chat," and upon one occasion when she came to tea Her Majesty offered the dog a whole biscuit. I was in fear and trembling, as I believed I knew what would happen. Chat, however, seemed to know that she must behave, and she took the biscuit and ate it without more ado, much to my relief.

After one of these visits I received the following letter from Lady Churchill:

"Balmoral Castle,
"*September* 25.

"My dear Madame Albani,

"I have received your note and have conveyed to the Queen all that you wished. Her Majesty was so much pleased with her visit to you—and your attention and care for her and for so kindly again singing to

H.M. I can assure you that the Queen has spoken a great deal of the visit, and I am so truly glad that I had some share in the matter, for I urged the Queen to pay you a visit and told Her Majesty that you would be so pleased and gratified by H.M. doing so.

"I am leaving this to-morrow, and am sorry to think that I shall not see you again, and shall miss a great treat when you come here. I am so glad to have made your acquaintance more, and trust to renew it later in London.

"The ball must have been charming, and I am sure the ladies enjoyed the dancing with the gillies. I do trust that you are none the worse for the lateness of the hour to which you had to keep up.

'My kind remembrances to your sister and the same to yourself,

"Believe me, dear Madame Albani,

"Yours very sincerely.

"J. CHURCHILL."

Every year when we stayed at Mar Lodge I used to drive over regularly to Balmoral to sing to the Queen. The distance from Old Mar Lodge to Balmoral is, as I have said, about thirteen miles, and the scenery is most beautiful the whole way, passing through the

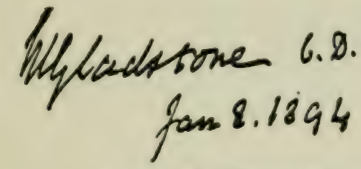
village of Braemar. In the Braemar district there are a great many Roman Catholics —in fact, the major portion of the population is Catholic—and there is quite a large Catholic church in Braemar. I sang in this church on one occasion for the benefit of the poor of the country round, and numbers of people came from all parts, many of them travelling long distances to attend.

It was during one of these holidays at Old Mar Lodge that I made the acquaintance of Mr. Gladstone. He and Mrs. Gladstone came to stay with Lord Fife at Mar Lodge, which was about three-quarters of a mile away from the house we occupied, and we sometimes went to lunch there on Sundays. On one occasion when they were there I sang "Angels, ever bright and fair," and "Ave Maria" of Gounod in the chapel after the service, at the request of Lord Fife. Later in the afternoon they came over to us to tea, and I had the pleasure of a long conversation with Mr. Gladstone. His personality greatly charmed me, and I was particularly impressed by his great interest in music and by the beautiful quality of his speaking voice.

In the winter of 1884 I sang at Brussels, La Haye, Amsterdam, and Antwerp, where

the public was most enthusiastic. Besides the opera I sang at a big concert given by the Antwerpische Toonkunslenaars Vereeniging—a musical society—when I was presented with a badge of honour and a magnificent basket of roses.

At Brussels L'Association des Artistes Musiciens gave me their badge and a gorgeous bouquet of flowers with inscribed ribbons. Here I met for the first time Mr. Gewaërt,



FROM MY AUTOGRAPH BOOK

the Director of the Conservatoire and a great musician. He used to come frequently to the opera, and was a very good friend to me.

The Handel Festival of 1885 at the Crystal Palace was conducted for the second time by Mr. Manns, he having been appointed three years before in place of Sir Michael Costa, who was taken suddenly ill. The artistes engaged were, besides myself, Madame Patey, Madame Trebelli, Mlle. Valleria, Mr. Lloyd, Mr. Mass, Mr. Santley, and Signor Foli. I note from an official return that the number

of visitors to the Palace on one of the days of this festival was the record one of 22,100—an enormous audience for a concert. One of the most striking features, and one that made a great impression upon me, was the absolute silence that prevailed in this immense audience whilst I was singing "I know that my Redeemer liveth." It was a silence that one could almost feel. The chorus numbered over 3,000 and the band 500, so that, when all these were singing and playing and were joined by the great organ, the effect was something astounding and is not to be easily described.

The two important novelties at the Birmingham Festival of 1885, which were more than ordinarily important, were Gounod's "Mors et Vita," and Dvořák's "Spectre's Bride." I sang the principal parts in both these works; indeed, they were composed in part for me and with regard to my voice. M. Gounod did not come to England to conduct his work, as in the case of the "Redemption" three years before, but Herr Dvořák rehearsed and conducted his cantata.

I have already mentioned Dvořák, in connection with his "Stabat Mater," when speaking of oratorio; but this was the first

occasion on which I met him. He was a most interesting man, and an eminent though extremely modest musician. I had studied the "Spectre's Bride" diligently for weeks, and as I was unable to go to the composer at Pesth, I was obliged to form my own ideas about it. I found at rehearsal, much to my disappointment, that my conception of some of the numbers did not quite agree with his, but we managed to affect a compromise, and I was able to sing them as he wished without sacrificing my own conception of the part. The performance met with the greatest possible success at Birmingham.

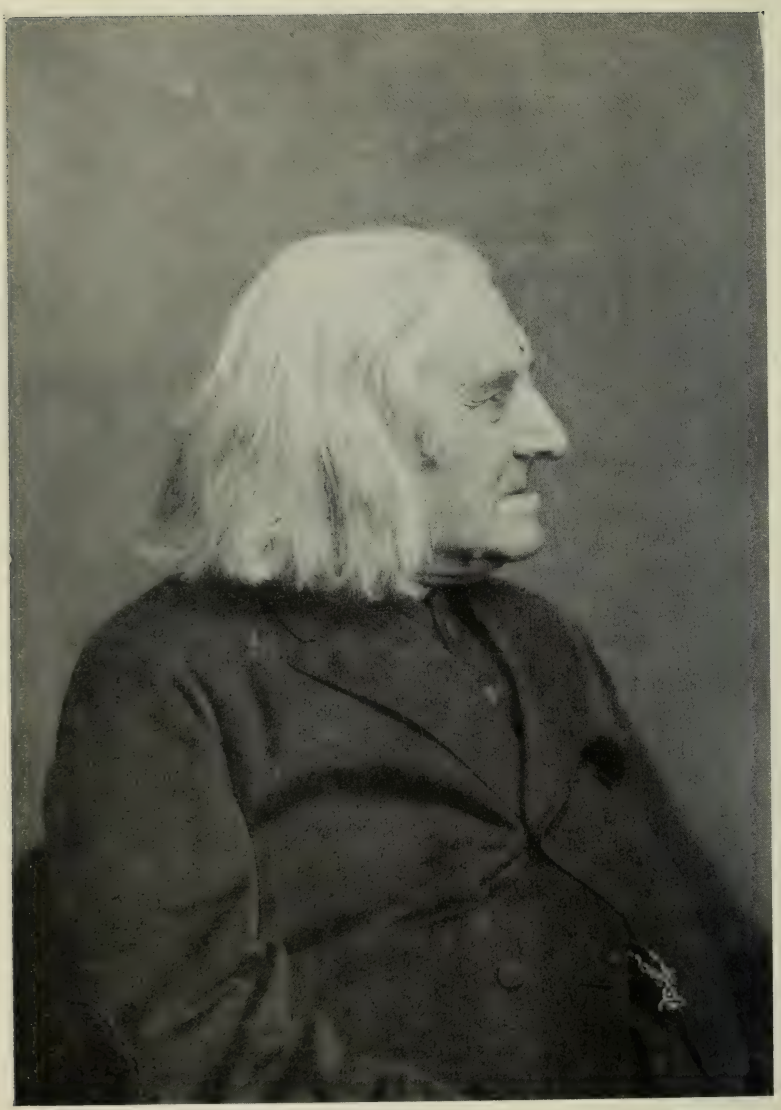
"Mors et Vita" was also most favourably received, and some parts of it had a greater vogue than even the "Redemption." This oratorio was given over and over again in England, and I often had the privilege of singing it in London. Her late Majesty asked for it at the Albert Hall, and a performance was organised for her there.

The Bristol Festival, which took place this year, was again conducted by Sir Charles Hallé, and I should like to say a word in testimony of my admiration of this sterling musician. He was a student of every class of music, and was equally at home in Italian,

German, English, and French, in operatic, classical, or sacred music. He instituted the Hallé Subscription Concerts in Manchester, and carried them on for many years. The season for these lasted twenty weeks, with one concert per week in Manchester; the days intervening being taken up with concerts in other towns, the orchestra sometimes going as far as Edinburgh, Glasgow, and Aberdeen. For the concerts out of Manchester Hallé took with him, on account of the expense, only forty musicians, and this gained for the enterprise the nickname in the North of "Hallé Baba and the Forty Thieves."

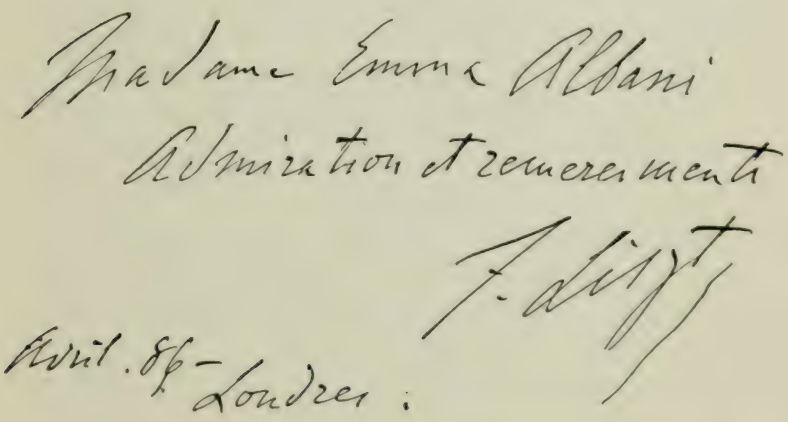
Sir Charles Hallé was an extraordinary worker. I have sung with him very many times, at his own concerts and at festivals, but all the necessary correspondence about engagements, programmes, etc., was always in his own handwriting; and all this was done whilst he was travelling, rehearsing, conducting, and studying his piano, for he always played at least one pianoforte solo at his own concerts. The musicians of England owe much to Sir Charles Hallé for the amount of good music he introduced.

In the early part of 1886 I went to Holland to give some performances of opera with the



LISZT.

company of French artistes then at the theatres there. This was my first visit to Holland, and I was much struck with the country, its peacefulness, and above all its cleanliness. The Hague is a very pretty town, but more like a country town than a capital city. I was lucky enough to please



the opera-goers, and the nights upon which I sang soon became anxiously looked forward to.

Towards the end of March of 1886 the Abbé Liszt paid a visit to London, and this occasion was taken advantage of by English musicians to do honour to the celebrated virtuoso and composer. A reception was given for him in, if I remember aright, the Grafton Gallery, and I was delighted to have

the opportunity of meeting the old musician of world-wide fame.

The fact of his coming to England had been known a long time in advance, and it was thought only due to him to perform one of his works. His oratorio "St. Elizabeth" was prepared, and I was invited to undertake the title-part. The performance took place at St. James's Hall with a success not likely to be forgotten by any one present. The hall was packed to suffocation. The Prince and Princess of Wales and other members of the Royal Family were present; and all the principal musicians of England, and of course Liszt himself, assisted at the performance. It was not very long after this visit to London—in fact, I believe within a year—that his death took place.

I had the privilege in 1886 of taking part (if only a small one) in a most interesting ceremonial—viz. the opening in state of the Colonial and Indian Exhibition by Her Majesty the Queen. This ceremony took place in the Royal Albert Hall. The Queen, the Royal Family, and the officials of the household were seated on the front part of the platform, a large orchestra and chorus

being arranged behind them. The immense hall was full to overflowing, a great part of the audience consisting of representatives of the British Colonies and colonials visiting or living in England, and it was a most striking thing, and one never to be forgotten, to see our late Empress-Queen surrounded by nine thousand or ten thousand people belonging to every race and every religion on the face of the earth, and yet who were all her subjects. It brought home to one the extent and power of the British Empire.

Of course my share was in the musical part of the ceremony. I sang with the chorus an ode written expressly for the occasion, the words being by Lord Tennyson and the music by Sir Arthur Sullivan, and near the end of the ceremony I sang "Home, Sweet Home." The great occasion with its wonderful surroundings, and the knowledge that I had to sing all alone before such a large and important gathering, made me feel so nervous that I feared it would be impossible for me to sing. The "Hallelujah Chorus," during the performance of which everybody stands, was being sung just before my turn was to come, and I asked Sir Arthur Sullivan to place himself in front of me so that I might

sit down for a minute to recover. Luckily this was effectual, and I was able to fulfil my duties. I shall never forget this day, nor shall I ever forget the Queen's reply to the Address read to her by H.R.H. the Prince of Wales. Her Majesty read her reply herself, and the effect in the great space of the Albert Hall was marvellous. Every word was heard distinctly and clearly; her voice was sweet and possessed of splendid carrying power. I am sure that not one word was lost to any one of that vast audience.

Another interesting ceremony of the kind, which I may mention here in passing, was the opening of the Imperial Institute by Queen Victoria in 1893, at which it was arranged that I should sing the National Anthem. This fine building in South Kensington was intended as a rendezvous for colonials, where they could meet to discuss the affairs and view samples of the products of their various countries. The great hall of the Institute was not then finished, so the ceremony took place in a temporary hall, and the sight there was a most brilliant one. A large orchestra was conducted by Sir Arthur Sullivan, and played a grand march specially composed by him for the occasion, and also

accompanied me in "God Save the Queen." I remember that the day was a splendid spring day—in fact, real "Queen's weather."

It was in December of this same year (1893) that the new Queen's Hall in Langham Place was opened, and, to celebrate this, a performance of the "Hymn of Praise" was given, at which I was engaged to take part, Mr. Lloyd being also in the cast.

The Leeds Festival of 1886 was noteworthy for the production of Arthur Sullivan's "Golden Legend," with which I was very happy to be associated, and which I have sung many times since. I have seen many new works produced at our English festivals, but I have never seen any one that has had such spontaneous and lasting success as the "Golden Legend." The Town Hall was crammed at advanced prices on this occasion, and the enthusiasm at the close of the cantata was tremendous; one could hardly believe the English public capable of showing so much. Two other new works were given at this festival—viz. Dvořák's "St. Ludmila" and Mackenzie's "Story of Sayid."

The latter part of this autumn was taken up with a concert tour in England, and amongst the artistes singing with me was

Mlle. Antoinette Trebelli, a daughter of the well-known Madame Trebelli, a charming light soprano with a very clear, pretty voice, and a good singer.

I have been engaged for and given many concert tours myself, and it is wonderful to see how the publics of the provincial towns enjoy a good concert—how they flock to it, how silent they are during the performance of a piece, and how they show their pleasure when it is finished. I have always endeavoured to sing good music myself, and have always had as much good, even classical, music in my programmes as possible, but the public appreciate it all, and, like Oliver Twist, invariably want more. There is an enormous amount of money spent in England during the year on music, and this, combined with their great appreciation of it, is another refutation of the notion that the English are not musical.

When I first made a concert tour in England I was surprised at the excellent concert rooms which are to be found in the principal towns. Many of them are very large and some very fine, accommodating large audiences, often over two thousand people, and some even larger than that. The town halls,

always used for music, of Birmingham, Leeds, and Newcastle are especially fine, and the concert halls of Liverpool, Plymouth, Bristol, Edinburgh, and Glasgow are splendid rooms and will each seat close upon three thousand people. Nearly all of these have a large orchestra for band and chorus, and possess an organ, so that the oratorios or concerts on the largest scale can be given. I do not know of any other country possessing so many and such fine halls for concerts. There is one thing, however, which they nearly all lack—and that is, comfortable waiting-rooms for those taking part in the performance. Most of these are inconveniently situated, badly lighted and ventilated, and sometimes without fireplaces. It really seems that, when a hall is built, the last thing the architect thinks of is the comfort of those who have to do the work of the evening.

In the beginning of 1887 I was again engaged for several performances at the Berlin Royal Opera House. I sang in "Lohengrin" and the "Flying Dutchman" in German, and in "Rigoletto," "Traviata," and "Faust" in Italian. The public and the critics were good enough to say very kind things about my realisation of the character of Senta, and

the Emperor sent me his compliments and thanks.

At that time the Empress Augusta was in the habit of giving an evening party every Thursday, to which only her intimate acquaintances and some official people were invited. I was asked to sing at one of these, and it was most interesting to be present and to mix on comparatively familiar terms with all these notable people. One thing struck me very much in the manner of serving the refreshments. Instead of their being prepared in a separate apartment, when the proper moment was reached, several servants brought in a number of small tables, placed them here and there about the room, and set out upon them all kinds of good things. The evening altogether was conducted in a *sans cérémonie* manner, which added in a great measure to the enjoyment.

Sir Edward Malet was the English Ambassador in Berlin at that time. I had the privilege of knowing him and Lady Ermyntrude, and I enjoyed two or three delightful evenings at the Embassy. Sir Edward asked me to sing at a concert at the Embassy, to which he invited only the Crown Prince (afterwards Emperor Frederick) and the Crown

Princess and members of the Royal Family. It was very select and most delightful. I was much charmed with the manner and the kindness of the Crown Prince. He put me at my ease in a moment, and chatted with me almost like an old friend.

During our holiday in Scotland in this same year we saw a good deal of the Crown Prince of Germany. His illness, which later on terminated fatally, was then coming on, and Sir Morell Mackenzie, the great throat specialist, had ordered him to spend some few weeks at Braemar in the hope that the fine air and perfect quiet there might be of benefit to him. He was one of the nicest and kindest men I have ever met, and one could not be in his company long without feeling perfectly at one's ease. He came to tea one day at Old Mar Lodge, and stayed a long time chatting about all kinds of things.

I remember his telling me a little story which shows his sympathetic nature. He said, "When I was engaged to the Princess, I was at Balmoral, and we walked out one day and found some white heather at a certain place. Well, I went to Balmoral yesterday and visited the same spot, and there, curiously enough, found again some white heather; so

I packed it up and sent it to the Princess in Berlin, as it is her birthday to-morrow."

After Berlin I went to Holland, where I sang at The Hague, Amsterdam, Rotterdam, and Harlech, and then gave a few performances in Brussels and Antwerp.

It was during this time that Sir Arthur Sullivan gave his "Golden Legend" in Berlin, and just before my last night in Antwerp, which was the end of my engagement, I received an urgent telegram telling me that the performance had not satisfied him at all owing to the soprano, a German belonging to the opera, not properly understanding that class of music, and consequently not having sung the part to the best advantage. He begged me to come and sing at a second performance. We looked out the trains, calculated the journey and the time there would be for preparation and rest, and telegraphed back "I will come." I sang in "Traviata" at Antwerp on Thursday evening, started at 7 a.m. on Friday, reached Berlin at 11 p.m., and found Sir Arthur Sullivan on the platform, waiting anxiously to make sure by ocular demonstration that I had arrived. As I had already sung his work under his own direction, there was no need to rehearse,

and indeed I wanted all the time there was to spare for repose.

The performance took place in the Opera House before a crowded audience, which included the Crown Prince and Princess and several members of the Royal Family, and culminated in a great success. Sir Arthur and I were called to the front many times during the evening, and after the second part I was sent for to the Royal box, and heartily congratulated by the Prince and Princess. The critics said that "Madame Albani had shown them the beauties of the work, which had not been apparent at the first hearing, and had converted a comparative failure into a triumph." Many people begged for another performance, but Sir Arthur thought it best to "leave well alone."

In the latter part of this year I made a concert tour of the principal English towns, also visiting Ireland and Scotland. It has always been a great pleasure to me to go to Ireland and to sing there, and I fancy that I have been able to give pleasure in return to the Irish. They love music, and are most attentive whilst it is going on, and most enthusiastic when it is finished.

It was during a subsequent concert tour

in Ireland that I made the acquaintance of two very celebrated and interesting men, Dr. Knox, the Protestant Primate of Ireland, since dead, and the well-known Bishop of Derry, both of whom kindly invited me and my husband to stay with them for my concerts.

The occasion of my meeting the Archbishop was at a concert which I gave to assist the Armagh Philharmonic Society, when I was invited to the Palace to stay. Armagh is a very small town, and consequently cannot afford to pay good artistes. Therefore my visit produced great excitement and enthusiasm. I was splendidly received and, at the close of the concert, was presented with an illuminated address. We also had a very pleasant stay at Londonderry with the old Bishop, and I do not think that I ever met two more genial and agreeable men.

In December of this year a performance was arranged at Windsor for Her Majesty. I sang "Hear my prayer," "With verdure clad" from the "Creation," and "From Thy love as a Father" from Gounod's "Redemption." The choir of St. George's Chapel sang with me, and Sir Walter Parratt was at the organ.

At the beginning of the following year I

broke new ground, and went to Norway, Sweden, and Denmark for concerts. I visited Stockholm, Copenhagen, and Christiana ; these being about the only towns large enough for an important concert.

Whilst in Denmark I was honoured with an invitation to sing at the Palace before the King and Queen. They were most kind to me, and the King presented me with a decoration, the Order of Merit. After one of my songs the Queen said to me, " Do you ever breathe ? " This I took as a great compliment to my singing. I afterwards received the following letter from the Queen :

" Amalienborg, 1888.

" Je ne peux me refuser le désir de prendre de nos nouvelles, chère Madame Albani, tout en vous remerciant pour le plaisir incomparable que j'ai eu d'entendre votre chant si simpatique et beau, dont je garde ainsi que le Roi, et certainement tout le monde un souvenir des plus charmants. Dites-moi comment vous allez et tous mes vœux pour votre voyage.

" Louise."

As it was in winter that this visit took place, all was ice and snow, resembling my Canada ; but it struck me that Scandinavia must be

a lovely country in the summer. There is so much sea, so many islands, all of which lend themselves to delightful excursions, especially near Stockholm. The celebrated pianist, de Pachmann, took part in some of my concerts here.

I also sang at some representations in Holland and Belgium before going back to England. At Antwerp Gounod's "Romeo and Juliet" was mounted for the first time for many years, and I sang the part of Juliet. Gounod paid me the high compliment of coming from Paris to conduct the first performance.

CHAPTER XIII

TOURS IN CANADA AND THE UNITED STATES

In January of 1889 I started for Canada, having organised a series of concerts in the principal cities. This was the first time I had visited my native country upon an extended tour, the two previous visits having been but short and limited; but now I went there to give concerts in as many towns as the time at my disposal would allow. My presence in Canada was therefore taken advantage of to fête me and to show the pleasure my countrymen felt at my being amongst them again.

I took my own artistes from England, and we went direct to Montreal and gave two concerts there, meeting a great number of old friends. At Quebec, which I next visited, I was received most kindly and was overwhelmed with attentions. The Premier of the province gave a *déjeuner* for me, to which a number of the principal people of Quebec

were invited. I was asked to attend a meeting of the Parliament when a debate was in progress, and one of the members, who was speaking, alluded to my presence in the House, rather to my discomfiture.

But the prettiest and most characteristic event took place when the Snow Shoe Clubs assembled at our hotel. In Canada there are many clubs formed for the purpose of promoting the sport of snow-shoeing. The members wear suits made of very thick white blanket adorned with facings and ribbons of various colours, according to the club. All these young men, to the number of over two hundred, came to my hotel one evening after dark, carrying torches, and escorted me in my sleigh to the Parliament House. There I was shown into a room looking on to the front of the building, whilst the snow-shoes assaulted it with fireworks. Roman candles, squibs, crackers, and rockets went off in hundreds, and the effect of these together with the torches upon the white snow was really like fairyland.

Quebec is an old and very picturesque city, almost entirely French. It is situated on high ground overlooking the River St. Lawrence, and magnificent views can be

obtained both up and down the river from the principal hotel. In summer time, or as soon as the bay and river are free from ice, the large Atlantic liners come up the river to Quebec and go on as far as Montreal.

An ice palace had been erected this winter in Montreal. This palace is built of large blocks of ice sawn out of the river. Water is then thrown over them, which freezes hard and binds all together. It is a beautiful erection, and is large enough to give balls in. Lighted with electric light and being transparent, the effect is lovely.

Ottawa was our next town, and although this is the seat of Government of the Dominion and the place where the Governor-General resides, it is a small town compared to Montreal or Toronto. My husband and I were invited by the Premier, Sir John Macdonald, to stay with him and Lady Macdonald whilst we were in Ottawa. This visit was to me one of great pleasure, and I was delighted to make the acquaintance and to be staying in the house of such a remarkable man as Sir John Macdonald. But he and Lady Macdonald were most kind and did everything they could for our comfort and pleasure. They gave a large reception for me, inviting every-

body in Ottawa who was anybody, and particularly those whom they thought I should like to meet. I believe I had to shake hands with something like five hundred people. I stayed a few days, but gave only one concert, another one being arranged later on.

One evening in the middle of dinner, a few friends having been invited, Sir John was called out, and he asked my husband to go with him. It turned out that he had promised the people to open a new ice slide, and would not disappoint them. They drove two or three miles and were then put into toboggans and shot across the Ottawa River in the dark, Sir John in the first one and my husband following in another. There was, of course, nothing to fear, but I was rather anxious until they returned.

The Macdonalds occupied a beautiful house, "Earnscliffe," on the banks of the Ottawa, which is now in the possession of Dr. Charles Harriss, who is doing so much for music in Canada and the Empire generally.

I also met Sir Wilfrid Laurier, whom I have had the pleasure of meeting many times since in Canada and in London. He is much loved both by the English and French Canadians, and he has done much to remove

Wilfrid Laurier

any little jealousies that may have existed between the two nationalities.

Remembering that the English conquered the French in Canada, it has always struck me as curious that a French-Canadian should be Premier and be liked by both sides. I believe the harmony that exists between the two nations is due in a great measure to the absolute liberty allowed the French-Canadians by their English brethren. Their religion is not interfered with, nor their schools, and they are on a par in everything with the English, and have equal rights. The French-Canadians live happily and contentedly, and bring up large families. They usually have families of twelve or thirteen, sometimes even more; and if there happen to be less, they think they have not done their duty to their country.

I have married an Englishman, and have made my home in England, but I still remain at heart a French-Canadian.

The railway directors in Canada were very good to me, and made my journeys much more comfortable than they might otherwise have been. The president of a railway and also one or two of the higher officials have their private cars, which contain sleeping-

berths, day saloon, and a kitchen, with a cook and a porter. We had Mr. Van Horne's car on our journey to Ottawa, and the negro cook served us such an excellent dinner that, when it was finished, we sent for him and complimented him. His answer was, " Glad you liked it, but if you come again I guess I'll show you what we can do on wheels." This man had been in the car when the late Lord Lathom with others had gone across the Continent, and they too were delighted with " Jim's " cooking. Lord Lathom went through the mock ceremony of knighting him, and after that he went by the name of " Sir James."

After Ottawa we gave concerts in Hamilton, London, Toronto, Ottawa, and Montreal again, and then went into the United States on a long trip across to the Pacific Ocean, giving concerts at the principal towns on the way, Albany being one of them, and the others Boston, Cleveland, Cincinnati, Chicago, St. Louis, Detroit, Denver, and San Francisco. In most of these towns I gave only one concert, but in Boston, Cincinnati, and Chicago there were two, and in San Francisco as many as five.

It is a long journey across the continent,

somewhat over three thousand miles, but we broke the journey into what the Americans call "short jumps" by stopping at these towns en route. It is very interesting to see the large towns, so unlike European cities, most of which are the growth of only a few years. Denver, for instance, at the time I am speaking of, was a large town, but fifteen years before there was not a house, only rough prairie. A great deal of this long journey is very uninteresting, there being long stretches of sandy prairie without a tree and hardly a bush. Some of it, however, is fine enough to make one forget the absence of beautiful scenery.

I also gave two concerts in Salt Lake City, the old home of the Mormons. This is a rather pretty town, the dwelling-houses having gardens attached to them, and there is a lovely stream of running water through several of the principal streets. Looking along the main street, there is a wonderful view over the prairie, with Pike's Peak, 14,000 ft. high, in the distance. We visited the Mormon Tabernacle, which is a very large oval building, and so wonderful for its acoustic properties that standing at one end of it one can hear a pin dropped into a hat at the other. Just

before we were there an Act had been passed forbidding polygamy among the Mormons, and in Salt Lake City no man was allowed more than one wife. In America a thing forbidden in one state can be practised with impunity in the next. Therefore some of the elders went into the state adjoining, taking two or three wives each, and so evaded the law.

I sang "Home, Sweet Home" as an encore at some of these concerts in the United States, and was much astonished to find that it appealed to my audiences there nearly, if not quite, as much as it does in England. I was at a loss to understand why until I reflected that the population of America largely consists of emigrants from Europe and mostly from Great Britain, and that the song brought back to them memories of their old homes and all the associations connected therewith, which in many cases had been partly forgotten. I know that this beautiful melody was always received with much enthusiasm, and listened to with the greatest pleasure. It is interesting to recall that the words of "Home, Sweet Home" were written by an American, John Howard Payne.

We reached San Francisco at last, and found roses in full bloom (in April) in the

open air, and fresh strawberries and raspberries served at breakfast. (I love raspberries!) The climate of California is an exceedingly mild one, and people live to a very old age. It is said that they live long enough to forget how old they are, and also that at last they go about on hands and knees, being too old to stand upright. I was told this, but cannot say that I altogether believe it. I gave four miscellaneous concerts, and for my fifth and last appearance gave the Garden Scene and last act of "Faust," having the necessary quartette of artistes, and having the costumes with us. Signor Beviquani was the accompanist of this tour, a very clever musician, and a very nice man to be associated with.

On leaving San Francisco we returned to New York, only breaking the journey to give a concert at one place, Denver. There was no time for more, as I was very soon due in London for the Covent Garden season. At Denver, there being no hall available, the concert took place in the large Baptist church, and the artistes stood to sing upon the lid which covered the dipping-tank. To give a concert of operatic and secular music in a church is thought nothing of in America, or was not at the time of which I write.

We reached New York on the Friday afternoon, and sailed from there on Saturday, reaching Liverpool a week later. Although the sea is not for me the most delightful part of the globe, I must say that I enjoyed the rest and quiet after the hard work and fatigue of a long tour, the inconveniences of so many strange hotels, and the dirt and rattle of seven thousand to eight thousand miles of railway travel.

In December of this same year I was engaged on a very important operatic tour in the United States, which extended to Mexico and San Francisco. It was under the management of Henry Abbey and Maurice Grau, and in the company were Madame Patti, Madame Nordica, Madame Scalchi, Signor Tamagno, Signor Ravelli, and many others whose names are not so well known. We commenced at Chicago, opening the new large Opera House, the Auditorium, which had just been completed. We stayed at Chicago one month, giving performances every night with a matinée every Saturday. As there were Madame Patti, Madame Nordica, and myself to sing, it was possible to give all these nights and to present a very varied répertoire.

It was here that I first sang Verdi's "Otello," which had already been produced in Italy. The part of Otello had been specially written for Tamagno, who had sung it when the opera was first given in Milan. He was coached in the part by Verdi himself and also by Boito, who wrote the libretto, and the result was a very perfect performance of the rôle. I can never forget his whole realisation of the part, which I think one of the best I have ever seen by any artiste. His physique was specially adapted to the character, and his splendid voice and temperament, combined with a wonderful amount of sympathy, made his performance of Otello a most remarkable one. His acting was wonderful, and in the last act, where he kills Desdemona, he was so apparently real that at first he made me quite nervous that he might make a mistake and forget that he was only acting. I sang this opera with him many times subsequently, and always with a great deal of pleasure.

It was during this engagement in New York that a rather touching incident occurred. The *World* newspaper gave a Christmas dinner to about, if I remember aright, four hundred of the street newsboys, and asked me to come and sing to them during the repast. The enter-

tainment took place in a very large restaurant in the business part of New York and this was full of these poor boys, my piano being placed right in the midst of them. Whilst I was singing, I noticed a small boy sitting quite near and staring intently at me, quite neglecting a large plate full of meat pie and vegetables which was set before him. One of the ladies attending on the little guests said to him, "But, my boy, why don't you eat your dinner?" to which he replied, still gazing at me, "I can't eat—I've got enough."

We spent Christmas at Chicago. I remember that before leaving England we had a Christmas pudding made at home and packed in our luncheon basket. This we took to America, and together with a few friends ate it at Chicago on Christmas Day, finding that it was none the worse for its travels.

The four weeks' season at Chicago being at an end, we all went to Mexico City, which is, I believe, about 2,500 miles due south from Chicago. We had a special train of thirteen large American cars, having to transport artistes, orchestra, chorus, and heaps of baggage, scenery, properties, etc.

It was a terribly long and weary journey from Monday evening until the following

Friday, but then we were obliged to stop nearly twenty-four hours in a village, as a railway bridge ahead of us had been broken a few days previously and the line was not yet repaired. There was a restaurant car on our train, but the provisions were very scanty, and in consequence our meals were anything but first-rate. The railway people had promised us all sorts of luxuries; they made us pay in advance, and then forgot to supply the luxuries!

The country through which we passed was for the most part extremely ugly, being almost a desert with very little vegetation, but huge cactus dotted here and there. From the leaves of this cactus is extracted a native spirit called "pulke." The peasants we saw at the stations were in a very primitive state.

However, we reached the city of Mexico at last, and went to the hotel, only to find it, as regards comfort and food, rather worse than the train we had just left. Luckily we had had something to eat—I cannot say "dined"—on the train; for we found that in Mexico it was not the custom for an hotel to supply anything to eat or drink, but that everybody went to restaurants for their meals. There was not a fireplace in any of our rooms,

and I believe that this also is not a popular institution in Mexico. As the city is over 7,000 ft. above sea-level and there is often ice in the streets at night, this absence of fires is very disagreeable. The natives get over the difficulty by lounging in the sun, doing nothing all day, and when the sun goes to bed they go too.

Mexico is so far away that the people seldom get anything in the shape of music, and until our arrival it had been several years since any opera had been heard. There was consequently considerable excitement about us, and a large subscription was made for the two weeks that we were to stay. We were told that the ladies sold or pawned their jewels and pianos, and the young men went without a good dinner for a month in order to buy tickets for the opera. The performances were very successful, and the public was most enthusiastic and evidently thoroughly enjoyed the operas, which were performed in a style and with artistes that they had certainly never heard before, and most likely would not hear again, at least for a very long time.

I must relate one experience that I had. The arrangements on the stage left much to

be desired, and there were very few of the modern requirements to be obtained. I was singing in "Otello," and in the last act, the bedroom scene, Signor Tamagno requires for his death the bed to be placed on a platform with three steps leading up to it, down which he rolls in his death agony. The steps were forthcoming, but there was no platform. Tamagno would not relinquish his scene, so the bed was put upon the backs of four men on their hands and knees, and upon this insecure foundation I had to go to bed and be smothered by Otello. Nothing happened, luckily, but I was very anxious indeed until the act was finished and the curtain lowered. Although the public knew nothing, it was a very ridiculous position for a prima donna in a very dramatic situation.

At the end of the two weeks the opera company should have left to give a few performances at Los Angeles, but this engagement, for some reason I am not aware of, fell through, and we stayed in Mexico and announced three extra nights—one with Madame Patti, one with me, and one with Madame Nordica. For these three nights the theatre was practically empty; not because the public did not care to come, but simply

because they could not, having spent all their money at the previous performances.

I enjoyed the climate of Mexico City, which is very clear and bright. Even in January the sun is so hot in the daytime that one has to keep in the shade, but at night it is very chilly. In our hotel, with the help of an oil stove, which we had to buy, and a liberal use of railway rugs, we managed to keep fairly warm. We had arranged to have our food sent in from a restaurant. This was brought by a very dirty young waiter with a shock head and in his shirt-sleeves. It was always nearly cold, owing to its having to be carried through the streets, and generally some of the most important items were forgotten. The waiter excelled all his previous deeds when he brought up our last breakfast by letting the tray fall on the stone stairs and smashing everything on it. It made such a clatter that some people in the hotel thought that a revolution had broken out.

We had another long journey, nearly three days and nights, to San Francisco, which was our next place. Nothing very eventful happened on the journey, except that we were nearly stopped two or three times by what they call in America a " wash-out," and

had to go very carefully. A wash-out is the term given to the floods which are caused by the melting of the snow on the mountains at the beginning of spring. Large quantities of water come down, inundate the low-lying land, and very often wash away the railway, sometimes causing bad accidents. However, nothing of this sort happened to us, and we arrived at San Francisco all right, much delighted to get into the beautiful Palace Hotel after so much discomfort and inferior food in Mexico and the train.

We remained here two weeks, and I sang in "Faust," Boito's "Mefistofele," "Otello," and "Huguenots"—the two last with Tamagno. All the performances of the company were very successful, and were attended by large crowds. The public are rather lawless in San Francisco—at least, the lower classes. It was found that some of these music-lovers had obtained a ladder, by means of which they climbed through a window on the gallery staircase, and so got into the theatre above the check-taker and evaded payment. A policeman was placed at this window to stop this, but he, not seeing why he should not profit by their anxiety to see the opera, made them pay, putting

the dollars into his own pocket, and then let them in.

I liked the people I met in San Francisco very much and experienced a great deal of kindness and hospitality from them. It is the custom in New York rather to disparage the people in the West, and to look upon them as not being up to their own standard; but I must say this was not my experience. I met many nice people and much enjoyed their society.

We went from San Francisco to Denver, Omaha, Louisville, paid a return visit of a week to Chicago, stayed at Boston for a week, and then arrived in New York for a short season of three weeks. Some of the American newspapers amused me very much; they vie with one another in inventing sensational headings to their articles. At Denver one of them had the following headline with reference to "Otello": "Albani and Tamagno: the two stars shine together in resplendent beauty and strength." Another one in San Francisco began thus: "Opera in Wet Weather. Huguenots against the Rain, and Music wins the Day"! Portraits of the principal artistes, too, generally appear with the criticism, and I cannot say that they are always very flatter-

ing. However, they were universally nice and complimentary to me, so that I brought away with me a good opinion of the American Press.

After the season in New York was finished—and this was also the end of the operatic tour—I went with a few of the artistes to give some performances in Albany, Toronto, Montreal, and Quebec before leaving for England. It was the first time that I had sung in a whole opera in these places, and consequently a great deal of interest was aroused amongst my old friends. I sang in "Lucia" and "La Traviata" in each city, and may say, I hope without being conceited, that I had a splendid reception at each. In Albany I was given a reception at the High School, where I met many old friends and others, and where speeches were made. I sang to the pupils "Home, Sweet Home" and "Robin Adair."

At Montreal I gave a concert in aid of the Hospital of Notre Dame, a French institution, and therefore one appealing peculiarly to me. It was splendidly responded to by the public, and resulted in a considerable sum being realised for the charity. At the conclusion of the concert I was presented with a very

handsome album containing one hundred views of Canada from Hailfax to Vancouver, and also an illuminated address. At Quebec I sang only in a concert, there being no available theatre there. The public made quite a fête for me on this occasion. M. Fréchette, the poet of whom I have before spoken, came on to the platform and read an address in my honour that he had written. In fact, this visit to Canada proved almost as important and quite as delightful as my first visit a few years before.

Six years later, in November 1896, I started on another concert tour in Canada. I had returned to Canada once or twice during the interval, but only for short and comparatively unimportant tours. The present tour was to be a much more important one than its predecessors, as we had arranged to go right across the continent to Vancouver and Victoria on the shores of the Pacific, stopping at all the towns of any importance on the way to give concerts. We began at Halifax and went through to Vancouver, a distance of something like 3,500 miles.

The plan for the concerts was, where a stage and scenery were available, to give a first part of miscellaneous pieces, and in the

second part the Garden Act and Prison Scene of "Faust" with costumes and scenery. I had selected artistes who were capable of undertaking this work. In both these acts of "Faust" no chorus is required, and the scenery necessary for them is to be found in every theatre. Our tenor was a very good singer, but he had never been on the stage, and I remember his astonishing our fellow-passengers on the vogage out by appearing one day in the saloon in the full costume of Faust. He said he wanted to get accustomed to the dress, but they all thought at first that a new passenger had come on board. We rehearsed, when the sea permitted, on the voyage; but one had generally to hold on to the piano, and occasionally to make a hurried bolt.

We gave concerts in Halifax, St. John's, Quebec, Montreal, Toronto, and Ottawa—all places that I had sung in before—and then began our journey long "out West." The through train to Vancouver starts from Montreal, distant from Vancouver 2,900 miles, and does not stop all the way except for the necessary delays for examining and watering the train, etc., and at the top of the Rocky Mountains for lunch and dinner. The Cana-

dian Pacific Railway is celebrated for the comfort of its sleeping- and dining-cars, and for the civility of its employés. The Company most kindly put a special car at my disposal for our party, to stop where we stopped and bring us back to Montreal. This made our journey most comfortable, especially as, when the train came at a very early hour in the morning through a town where we had stopped, we all went to bed in the car, were picked up by the train, and woke up in the morning to find ourselves again on the road and the breakfast ready.

In all the 2,900 miles of this long journey there are only four towns sufficiently large to support a concert—Winnipeg, Calgary, Vancouver, and Brandon; but the tedium of the journey is lightened by the magnificent scenery one passes through.

Winnipeg was the first town we visited after leaving what may be called Central Canada—that is, Toronto and its neighbourhood. It is 1,420 miles from Montreal, and is fast becoming a great industrial centre. Situated in the middle of the plains of Manitoba, and 700 feet above sea-level, it lies in the midst of the quiet corn-growing district where, during the summer, a golden sea of

waving corn is to be seen on all sides as far as the eye can reach. At the time of my visit quite other conditions prevailed, as the thermometer stood at forty degrees below zero, an exceptional degree of cold even for Canada. This severity of climate, however, did not deter the public from attending the concert. This was given in the large drill hall, and we had a very enthusiastic audience of over four thousand.

From here we went to Calgary, 1,500 miles further across the continent, and gave two concerts. Calgary is about 3,400 feet above the sea, and is a small town in the midst of the great cattle-ranches, which belong, many of them, to Englishmen, amongst whom are to be found many young men of good families who, for various reasons, have emigrated to try their fortune in Canada. Advantage was taken of my visit and concerts to make a regular holiday week, one or two dances being got up, and other amusements, during the time we were there. The young men from the ranches came in to Calgary from long distances—a few, I was told, as far as 100 miles—to stay and have a good time. I was surprised to see walking about the streets young men, evidently gentlemen, in suits of

clothes of London make ; and at the concerts the appearance of the hall made me fancy myself in St. James's Hall, so well dressed was the audience, most of them being in full evening dress.

Whilst at Calgary we visited the barracks of the North-West Mounted Police. This force was instituted to repress the incursions and raids of the North American Indians, and generally to keep order in those immense tracts of territory. The men must be of excellent character, bold and fearless, as they have to be away from barracks, two or perhaps three together, for days at a time, in the saddle all day, and sleeping at night rolled up in a blanket on the ground. They are police, magistrates, and, when necessary, executioners. They arrest, try, and punish offenders. We saw in a cell an Indian who had been punished numberless times for various offences, and whose latest exploit was throwing a baby on to the fire. He glared at us more like a wild beast than a human being, and I rejoiced that an iron-grated door intervened between him and myself.

The high peaks of the Rocky Mountains can be seen from Calgary quite distinctly,

although nearly 100 miles distant, and three or four hours after leaving the town the train begins to find itself amongst the foot-hills surrounding them.

After leaving Calgary the passage of the Rockies and the Selkirks begins, and the mountains are only left, after a journey of 800 miles, as Vancouver is reached. At the highest point of the pass the railway attains an altitude of over 5,000 feet, and the whole journey occupies on average, from Atlantic to Pacific, six days and nights, though of course in winter delays are apt to occur through the severe snowdrifts. The scenery of this route is simply marvellous, and affords a constant panorama of wonder and delight. As the train approaches the highlands, the mountains narrow in until the line passes between two rocky walls of dizzy height, called "The Gap," which suggests sentinels forming what looks like an impenetrable barrier. As rays of light fall through, they reveal on the rocky surface shades of deep purple softening into white tinged with gold, and above again rise the snow-capped peaks of dazzling brightness. The Bow River runs below, and the roar of the Bow Fall can be distinctly heard, though it is not in view.

On emerging from the Gap one of the finest and most curious views in the world is obtained, for here in pre-historic ages an enormous convulsion must have taken place, the earth has been rent asunder, and these immense mountains heaved aloft to heights of many thousand feet. The outlines are fantastically broken, the highest peaks covered with perpetual snow, and the scene is at once wild and weird, but most beautiful. Many ranges of these mountains are traversed, varied by valleys in which are seen great herds of cattle, sheep, and horse, rivers crowded with fish, coal-mines, saw-mills, hot springs, and the signs of almost every product which a beneficent nature showers upon us.

From Canmore station there is a fine view of the Three Sisters, the Wind, and Pigeon Mountains, and here also is the anthracite coal district. At Banff are the sulphur springs which attract visitors of every nationality, northward of which lies Cascade Mountain, 9,375 feet above sea-level, and near also the Devil's Lake, in which are very large trout. Mount Stephen and Mount Sir Donald —called after the present Lord Mount-Stephen and Lord Strathcona—are magnificent, but the Cathedral Mountain with its castellated

summit impressed us more than all, for we saw it glittering with crystalline brightness in the clear air, rose-tinted from the setting sun, and it was a sight I shall never forget.

A happy singularity belongs to the Canadian Pacific Railway in the fact that although passing without intermission through mountains and valleys for all these six days and nights, there are hardly any tunnels, and of the few there are all are so short as to interfere but very slightly with the continuity of the view.

At the Fraser River we were told that millions of salmon are taken out of it every year, the catching and tinning of salmon being a most important industry here, for the Fraser River salmon go all over the world.

From this point we descended all the way to Vancouver, arriving in Vancouver Bay alongside the steamer which takes passengers to Victoria, a distance of about 80 miles.

Some few years ago Vancouver was burnt down, but in an incredibly short space of time a fine and flourishing town has sprung up, with broad streets, excellent shops, good hotels—the principal one being that belonging to the Canadian Pacific Railway Co.—and a good-sized and very well appointed theatre,

in which we gave our concerts, and which also belongs to the C.P.R.

The Canadian Pacific Railway is a tremendous and magnificent undertaking, possessing as it does over 3,000 miles of line, and passing through, for a great part, most difficult country. It was planned and carried through in the face of very great obstacles, both in Canada and at home, by two men, Lord Mount-Stephen and Lord Strathcona, whose untiring energy and perseverance succeeded at last in completing one of the greatest works of the century.

Our concerts, as a combination of concert and opera, proved a great success, owing in some measure to the fact that a visit of an opera company was a thing of very rare occurrence in these far-away districts. Upon the whole our acts of opera went very well, but were sometimes difficult to arrange. At one place—it was Calgary, I think—nothing like limelight or electric light was forthcoming for the light effects in the Garden Scene of "Faust," and we had to fall back upon the big lamp of a locomotive, which the railway people lent us, and which did duty for the moon.

On arriving in Vancouver we had a warm

reception, enthusiastic applause, and crowded houses for our concerts, and also in Victoria.

The climate reminded me very much of the south of England, and the town of Vancouver is very English in the style of its buildings, both private and commercial, though a great contrast exists in the entirely separate Chinese quarter. English men-of-war belonging to the Pacific squadron are always in the harbour.

Turning our faces homeward, we again enjoyed the magnificent scenery on the line, before arriving at Winnipeg, where our first concert took place in the Selkirk Hall, people coming in from great distances. Before eight o'clock over two thousand persons were seated in the hall, which continued to fill until the audience was literally packed tight! How they contrived to applaud as they did was a bit of a problem.

The next day was Sunday, and I went to the Cathedral of St. Boniface and sang at the offertory Gounod's "Ave Maria"—in which Madame Beatrice Langley accompanied me on the violin and Signor Seppille on the organ—and an "Ave Verum."

Before giving out his text the Archbishop spoke the following words, as unexpected as

they were touching to me. He said: "I wish to express the satisfaction, pleasure, and honour we have to-day in the presence of one of the Queens of the musical world—one who is a favourite of our gracious Queen. I welcome her with all the cordiality of a fellow-countryman and all the satisfaction of a Catholic Bishop who is proud to see his countrywoman preserving, amid the glories of the world, the old traditions of her faith and nationality. May God grant that, after a long life of success and true merit, she may everlastingly sing with the angels the praises of God."

After Mass my husband, Madame Langley, and I went to St. Boniface Hospital, and I sang to the patients Gounod's "Ave Maria," Madame Langley again playing the obligato. It was an ordeal which awoke the pain in one's heart at sight of so much suffering, but which sweetened it too, for the tears evoked by Gounod's lovely hymn were sunny tears, and the poor patients and their kind nurses one and all declared we had "done them good." One weary sufferer kissed my hand and murmured, "Madame, you have brought a little piece of heaven to us to-day."

After concerts at Brandon and Port Arthur

we went to Toronto for our concert, but so many people were unable to obtain seats that we were obliged to give a second concert, which was also crammed full; and then returned to Montreal for the finish of the tour. The "welcome back" I received here was equalled only by that accorded to me on our arrival; and after giving our last concert, amidst the warmest and most friendly enthusiasm—and having the horses taken from our carriage, the carriage itself being dragged by the students to our hotel—we sailed for "home."

CHAPTER XIV

SOME MEMORABLE CONCERTS

DURING my career I have sung at hundreds, I might almost say thousands, of concerts in all parts of the world. It is impossible to specify when and where these took place, but there are a few which may be classed as notable for some special reason, and some of them I should like to mention.

An experience which I always enjoyed was singing at State concerts, and I sang at one at least every season for many years. The State concerts at Buckingham Palace, of which two were given every season, were very interesting. They were organised under the best conditions, by the Master of the Musick. These executants were supplemented by several of the best instrumentalists in London, a chorus was engaged, and the first singers, both English and foreign, were commanded to appear. Unhappily, Queen

Victoria was never able to attend a State concert after the lamented death of the Prince Consort, though all the arrangements received her sanction and approval beforehand. The late King Edward and Queen Alexandra, then the Prince and Princess of Wales, and generally all the members of the Royal Family, were present, and the *coup d'œil* from the orchestra was one of great splendour and interest. The varied uniforms, full Court dress, and the toilettes of the ladies, glittering with most valuable jewels, made a charming picture.

It was in 1872—during my first London season—that I was honoured by a command to sing at a State concert, and though most grateful, I was very nervous, for it is an ordeal for a young singer to stand before such a gathering of Royalties and crowd of celebrated people. On this first occasion my nervousness was increased by my reception, for no one had thought of telling me that it was not etiquette to applaud, and consequently when my first effort was received in dead silence, as it seemed to me, I sat down feeling that I had made a complete *fiasco*. But my equanimity gradually returned when I found that every piece, however greatly it might

be appreciated, was never openly applauded or encored. At the end of the concert their Royal Highnesses, as they passed by on leaving the room, stopped and thanked the artistes personally, and I vividly remember during many after-years the warm kindness with which I have always been treated at these concerts, and the nice things that have been said about my singing.

Needless to say, a quiet solemnity prevailed at the State concerts, but on one occasion I remember the room being disturbed all at once by a very unusual and not particularly pleasant sound. The most excellent acoustic properties of the concert-room at Buckingham Palace enabled this sound to be heard all over it, and it was then seen that the Chinese Ambassador, perhaps not being accustomed to European music, had fallen asleep. He had woke up suddenly, giving vent to a loud snore, half snort, half groan, greatly to the amusement of everybody.

A visit to England of the German Emperor and Empress took place in the summer of 1891, and great festivities were organised for them. A State performance at the opera and a State concert at the Albert Hall were given. At the opera I sang in an act of "Les

Huguenots," and at the Albert Hall portions of Sullivan's "Golden Legend."

Princess Christian's silver wedding happened to be on Sunday, July 5, during the visit of the Imperial guests, and she wrote me the following letter :—

"WINDSOR CASTLE.
"*June* 20, 1891.

"MY DEAR MADAME ALBANI,

"I am writing a line to ask whether you would as a great favour sing here at the Castle on Sunday evening, July 5 (my silver wedding day), for Mama—some sacred music with the choir from St. George's and organ accompaniment? We will arrange for you to be lodged that night.

"If you agree, would you put yourself into communication with Mr. Parratt? Would you suggest anything? It should not be too severe, but, of course, it must be sacred.

"It would be a great pleasure to us all if you could do so.

"Yours most truly,
"HELENA."

I naturally accepted with delight, and a performance of sacred music took place in St. George's Hall, at which I sang three or

four solos. The choir of St. George's Chapel also took part, Sir Walter Parratt being at the organ. Only those staying in the Castle were present, but as these consisted of over thirty Royal personages and their suites, the audience was very numerous and exceedingly select.

On the Sunday following the German Emperor and Empress visited the late Marquis of Salisbury at his beautiful old place, Hatfield House, and I, together with Mr. Henschel, M. Holman, and M. Wolff, was invited to give the party some music after dinner. The Prince and Princess of Wales were present, the rest of the party, about eighty in all, being invited from amongst the most distinguished in the land. This gathering was one to be remembered, and my delight was great that it had been my privilege to have witnessed it. My husband and I stayed the night, and were present the next day when Lord Salisbury gave a garden party. The fine old mansion, which was once a Royal residence, has frequently been visited by Royal people, and the lovely gardens looked their best in the summer sun. The concert at Hatfield made my fourth appearance in one week before the German Emperor — a fact upon

which I look back with considerable satisfaction.

Whilst singing at the Hereford Festival in September of that same year, I received an intimation from Balmoral that, if it were at all possible to arrange, Her Majesty would be pleased to see me in an act or two of opera with scenery and costumes. This was rather difficult, as at that time of year no artistes were to be found in England, and I could sing in parts of operas only where I was alone. However, the Queen's wishes were law, and to me a great pleasure as well, and I decided to do the Jewel Scene from "Faust," the Mad Scene from "Lucia," and "The Willow Song" and "Ave Maria" from "Otello," all in costume. Luckily the orchestra of the festival, all London men, was at hand to draw upon, and we engaged seven of the best to form a small orchestra. When the festival was finished we went back to Old Mar Lodge, sending my maid to town for the costumes to meet us in Scotland. My husband undertook the arrangement of the stage with what scenery was available in the small theatre at the Castle, and the stage management; and in the following week we gave a performance before the Queen with which

Her Majesty was pleased to express herself much satisfied. Between my scenes of opera some of the instrumentalists played solos, in order to give me time to change my costume.

In connection with this performance at Balmoral I remember an instance of Her Majesty's kindly thought. That night I slept at the Castle, but the gentlemen of the orchestra drove back to Ballater to the hotel there. The next morning, very early, came a telegram from Balmoral to ask, in the Queen's name, if they had got back safely, and hoping that they had been comfortable.

The above performance was perhaps, in the strict sense of the word, hardly a concert, but it came naturally to my mind in speaking of command performances. Another performance of a similar kind took place three years later at Windsor Castle, when by command of Her Majesty a performance of the opera of " Faust " was given in the Waterloo Chamber, at which I sang Marguerite, M. Plançon was Mephistopheles, and Signor de Lucia Faust. This performance was arranged by Sir Augustus Harris, and was given with scenery, costumes, and as many chorus and as much *mise en scène* as was possible in the

small theatre in the Waterloo Chamber. I remember that the opera went very smoothly and gave great satisfaction to the Queen.

I believe this was the first occasion of Her Majesty being present at an operatic performance since the death of the Prince Consort. My husband and I went to Windsor the day before to see to some details for the morrow, and Her Majesty invited us to be present that evening at an Italian dramatic performance given by Signora Duse, the great Italian actress, at the Castle by command.

I must say a word here about the universal goodness of the Queen. At all these concerts or performances at Windsor or Balmoral it was her invariable rule to send for each and all who had taken part in or had had anything whatever to do with the performance, and say a few gracious words to each, this making everybody so honoured very happy.

I remember another occasion in the same year on which I went to Windsor to sing. Mlle. Chaminade, the talented French composer, was just then coming to the front, and her songs and pianoforte pieces were being much performed. The Queen was anxious to hear some of her compositions, and it was therefore arranged that I should

take her down to Windsor, when she would play and I sing some of her music before Her Majesty. We therefore made a programme entirely of Mlle. Chaminade's compositions and went to Windsor.

On one occasion I gave a special performance of the "Elijah" at Windsor, and afterwards received the following letters:

"WINDSOR CASTLE.
"*Dec.* 10, 1899.

"DEAR MADAME ALBANI,

"The Queen desires me to write and express to you Her Majesty's great enjoyment of the 'Elijah' yesterday, and her great appreciation of the way it was performed. The admirable manner in which all did their part afforded Her Majesty very great pleasure, but I was particularly to express the Queen's great admiration of your singing. H.M. thought she had never heard you in better voice, and only hopes you did not catch cold returning to London. The Queen also desires me to say how sorry H.M. was not to have been able to see you.

"Believe me,

"Yours very sincerely,

"VICTORIA GRANT."

"CUMBERLAND LODGE, WINDSOR.

"MY DEAR MADAME ALBANI,

"Ever since Saturday I have vainly tried to find a moment in which to write and tell you *how* delighted Mama was—we all were—every one was, at your beautiful singing in the 'Elijah.' Mama was *so* delighted and did enjoy it so thoroughly.

"My daughter and I were singing in the chorus, and never enjoyed anything more.

"Our Society was proud to have been able and allowed to sing with such artistes as sang on Saturday. I hope you will not mind my writing to tell you this.

"Believe me, most sincerely yours,

HELENA.

In the autumn of the following year I went on a concert tour in England and Scotland, and whilst in the North I arranged to give a concert at Balmoral before the Queen with the artistes who were with me on the tour—viz. Miss Clara Butt, M. Wolff, M. Holman, and M. Pugno. We succeeded in giving a good deal of pleasure to Her Majesty, who, according to her invariable custom, was most gracious and kind to all of us. It was always one of my greatest pleasures to

sing for the Queen. She was so appreciative, and in the little conversations I had with her ever showed herself so interested, not only in the music, but in many of my private affairs. It was always said of Queen Victoria that she knew all about everything and everybody; and, from my experience, I believe she did.

From the picture of these command performances, my mind looks forward for a moment to another picture, which stands out very vividly in my memory, the most solemn and affecting incident of my whole career, when I was commanded to sing in the Memorial Chapel at Windsor over the coffin of Queen Victoria, who was taken there on the Saturday and lay in the chapel until the burial at Frogmore on the Monday. This took place about six o'clock in the afternoon. The chapel was very dimly lighted, and I sang "Come unto Him" and "I know that my Redeemer liveth" to the accompaniment of an harmonium played by Sir Walter Parratt, only the King, the Queen, and those members of the Royal Family who were then at Windsor being present. It was a terribly hard task, but the memory of the dear Queen and of all her goodness to me

gave me courage, and I succeeded in this ordeal without breaking down. When I left, King Edward was at the door with tears in his eyes. He thanked me and said "Good-bye."

In connection with this historical but sad event M. Fréchette subsequently wrote the following lines :

ALBANI

AU CHEVET FUNÉRAIRE DE LA REINE VICTORIA

Froide, et couronne au front, la morte bien-aimée
Reposait sur un lit de rose et de jasmin ;
Sombre, et debout devant la forme inanimée,
Pleurait le fils d'hier, monarque de demain.

Non loin se prosternait une autre renommée,
Artiste dont la gloire a doré le chemin,
Diva cent et cent fois des foules acclamée . . .
Le roi s'approcha d'elle, et la prit par la main :

" Chantez ! " dit-il. Alors une voix chaude et tendre
Vibra dans le silence auguste, et fit entendre
Comme un long chant de deuil doucement sangloté. . . .

Emotion suprême ! ineffable harmonie !
C'étaient la Royauté, la Mort, et le Génie
Qui mélaient devant Dieu leur triple Majesté !

LOUIS FRÉCHETTE.

Very soon after my return from Balmoral in 1895—in fact, I believe I stopped there on my way to London—I sang at a concert in Chester organised by the late Duke of West-

minster in aid of the local charities. For this we stayed with the Duke and Duchess at Eaton Hall, the Duke's magnificent home close to Chester. Amongst those who took part in this concert were Countess Valda Gleichen, Mr. Kennerley Rumford, Mr. George Grossmith, etc.

The late Duke of Westminster was a great and very valued friend of mine. In all the years—and they were many—that I knew him, his kindness and consideration were beyond expression. I sang many times at Grosvenor House, when he would invite only a few people who, as he said, loved music and would not talk. After his death I felt very anxious to do some last little thing in affectionate remembrance, and I asked Dr. Bridge, the organist of Westminster Abbey, to allow me to sing at the Memorial Service in the Abbey. After consultation with the Dean, this was arranged, and I sang "Angels, ever bright and fair," from the organ-loft.

I venture to quote herewith extracts from two letters which have to do with this solemn and memorable occasion.

Extract from a Letter from Mr. George Wyndham to Lady Grosvenor.

"*December* 1899.

"The service in the Abbey was most beautiful, and I think exactly as 'Daddy' would have wished to have it. It was dignified and full of repose, and the music nearly all from Handel, just what he loved. Every seat in the choir and transepts was occupied, and none by strangers. I walked down with Arthur Balfour, and we sat in the stalls near the Duke of Cambridge and Prince Christian. Before 'Peace, perfect peace' the organ began to play 'Angels, ever bright and fair,' and suddenly, unexpectedly, for it was not on the printed paper, Madame Albani's voice soared up—she was unseen—by the organ, above the carved screen. The whole company were struck with awe at such perfect beauty. We were several hundreds, I suppose, but there was not the faintest rustle—not the least movement. You often hear of people being 'entranced'—well, they seemed in a trance, and not to be breathing. The quiet intensity of feeling in her voice brought tears to many eyes, and the dying fall from the last high note thrilled

the great church through with ecstasy. How often she has sung it to him! and was it not dear of her to do it once more for him! I shall never forget an instant of the scene this morning. From where I sat the ugly monuments were out of sight. There was only the ethereal architecture in time-worn stone, and the light filtering through the stained glass, and below the quiet congregation, the choir, and some Westminster Volunteers. Thus did Westminster remember its Lord High Steward."

Extract from a letter from Mr. Bodley to Mrs. Meynall.

"Holy Innocents' Day 1899.

"Dear Mrs. Meynall,

"I have thought that you might like to hear something about the Memorial Service for the good Duke at the Abbey this morning. The choir was quite full of people, evidently all friends, as all were in mourning. It was a solemn service. . . . The most striking thing was at the end, when the voice of some lady singer from the organ-loft sang 'Angels, ever bright and fair,' *most* beautifully. It was not set down in the book, and took

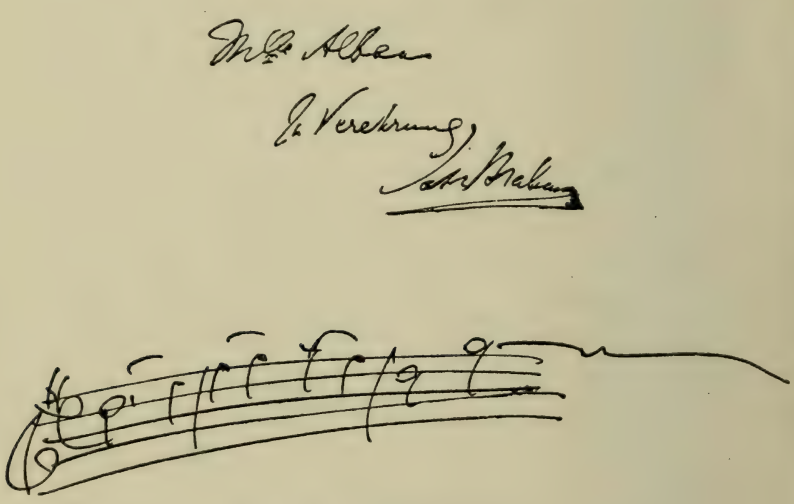
people by surprise. It was given with the very utmost feeling—or art—I think *both.* I could not bring myself to ask who the singer was ; it was so touching. I felt in the singing that the music combined with the beautiful interior of the Abbey gave one the highest possible aspirations, the grandest architecture and the grandest music. The most delicate notes seemed to fill the whole Abbey. . . ."

To go back for a moment to the year 1893, I should like to mention a concert tour which I gave in Vienna, Prague, Buda-Pesth, and other towns in Austria and Hungary. At Vienna I gave two concerts, and Dr. Richter being there at that time, I engaged him and his orchestra to assist me. This was the first time I had visited this part of the Continent, but I was most cordially received by the public. I remember that at my first concert I was recalled about twenty times during the evening, and had to sing four or five encores ; thus doubling the length of my original programme.

I made the acquaintance of Sir Augustus Paget, the English Ambassador in Vienna, and Lady Paget, and I helped at a small concert at the Embassy. I was also invited by the Crown Princess Stephanie to sing at

her palace one evening. After the tour was over I returned to England for some engagements I had in the provinces.

Whilst in Vienna I paid a visit to Brahms, the great composer. His room was full of



FROM MY AUTOGRAPH BOOK

old furniture and precious things, and he had a very high desk at which he always wrote standing. I sang part of his "Requiem" to him, and in the principal solo he was so affected that he shed tears. He told me that he entirely approved of my interpretation of his music.

BRAHMS.

I might mention in passing the concerts of the Royal Choral Society, at one of which I sang early in 1894, and for many years afterwards sang at two or three every year. The choir is all amateur and numbers between six and seven hundred, and was trained by the late Sir Joseph Barnby, under whom they attained to a high pitch of perfection. The concerts given by the Society consisted of oratorios, cantatas, etc., and I have always had much pleasure in singing with them.

I have often been asked if the Albert Hall is too large for singing, and if it is difficult for the voice. I think that, if the voice is properly produced, no existing place is too large. Naturally a high voice, soprano or tenor, carries farther than one of a lower register, and I have never had any difficulty in making myself heard in the Albert Hall or the Crystal Palace; and that, too, whilst singing quite naturally and without any extra exertion.

In February of that same year I started for Germany for some concerts in Berlin, Munich, Dresden, Stuttgart, etc. The morning I arrived in Berlin after a night's railway journey I received an invitation to sing that same evening at the palace of Prince and

Princess Aribert of Anhalt before their Majesties, who were dining there.

I remember that the Emperor was much amused at having induced me to sing directly after my journey. He also invited me to sing at the palace one evening, telling me that only lovers of music would be there. His Majesty was most kind upon this occasion, and gave me a lovely bracelet with a miniature

FROM MY AUTOGRAPH BOOK

portrait of himself, with the remark, "A photograph would fade, but this will not." As I left he said, "Give my love to Grandmamma if you see her before I do."

The Empress came to one of my concerts, and at the end sent for me to the Royal box. I had been having much success during the evening, and when the audience saw me with the Empress they commenced to applaud again, and so persistently that, when I left

the Royal box, I was obliged to appear afresh on the platform to acknowledge the greetings.

When this concert tour was finished, we went to Geneva to see our son, who was at school there, and to stay a few days. Whilst at Geneva an invitation arrived from the Duke of Saxe-Coburg (our Duke of Edinburgh) to go to Coburg to sing at a concert to be given in connection with the marriage of his daughter, Princess Victoria, with the Grand Duke of Hesse, telling me that Queen Victoria was to be there, and he knew she would be glad if I would come.

It was a very long and tiresome journey to Coburg. We had to sleep one night on the way, I think at Nuremberg, and I began to think we should never arrive. Of course on such an occasion as a Royal marriage Coburg, which is a very small town, was crowded to excess. We had written before starting from Geneva to Sir A. Condie Stephen, then the English representative at Coburg and a friend of ours, to secure rooms for us, and we found some reserved at one of the hotels. I must say that the accommodation was about as poor as it was possible to imagine, and we were most uncomfortable during our

stay. It was very interesting, however, to see the wedding festivities and to sing before the large number of Royal people assembled there, our Queen the central figure amongst them. The Duke gave me a decoration of his Order of Merit, and bestowed it also upon my husband.

A little incident which I always remember was when I was singing at a private concert on the evening that the present Prince of Wales was born. In the middle of the concert our host announced that the news had just come of the birth of the Prince, upon which there was a hearty cheer, and I sang "God save the Queen."

I subsequently received the following telegram from the Duke of Teck:

"Just read your charming letter to Alec Hood. We thank you most sincerely for your celebration of the event and kind congratulations.

"MARY AND TECK."

I have, of course, sung times without number at charity concerts, and some of them are very clearly impressed on my memory. Among these were two held for the benefit of the Jenny Lind Infirmary in Norwich, the

first in 1885 and the second in 1902. On the second occasion, when the proceeds realised over £1,000, I was presented with a large and handsome silver-gilt bowl, which bore the following inscription: "Presented to Madame Albani-Gye by the Committee of the Jenny Lind Infirmary for Sick Children, in grateful remembrance of her past generosity and of her crowning kindness in initiating and successfully completing the Charity Festival held in Norwich Cathedral, January 9, 1902."

Another occasion which I well remember is that of a large concert at the Albert Hall, given on behalf of the Home for Incurables, at which I sang "Home, Sweet Home," when a lady in the audience was so touched that she straightway wrote out a cheque for £1,000 in favour of the Home.

One other charitable concert I may mention was that organised in Paris for the British Charitable Fund, in which I was asked to join and to sing. Having a few days at my disposal before the season at Covent Garden began, I consented to go over and help the charity. My husband and I were invited to stay at the Embassy, where the concert was to be given, and I then made the acquaint-

ance of Lord and Lady Dufferin, which was for me an immense pleasure. The concert was a great success, and the charity benefited very considerably, so that my trip to Paris was not made in vain.

MADAME ALBANI.

CHAPTER XV

ROUND THE BRITISH EMPIRE

I CAN safely say that in the course of my long career I have sung in almost every corner of the British Empire. I have already described my various tours in Canada and the United States, but since then I have visited Australia, India, and South Africa.

These ocean voyages, after the first two or three days perhaps, are very enjoyable and often very amusing. The great thing about them is the absolute rest they entail, and, in this way, are invaluable to any one who has been hard at work for a long time. It is curious, too, how one almost immediately on leaving the wharf seems to lose all interest in what is going on in the world, and not to miss the morning paper. This faculty of putting away from one's mind for the time everything but the immediate surroundings must add in a great measure to the good which the rest and the fresh air bring.

I am afraid that the new system of wireless telegraphy will do away with much of this, and that we shall soon be as busy in the middle of the ocean as we are in the middle of London.

One meets many nice people amongst the passengers on board ship, and I have made some lasting friendships from amongst those I have met for the first time on my way to Australia or the Cape.

It was in the early part of 1898 that I left England for my first concert tour in Australia, under the auspices of Mr. J. C. Williamson, the principal theatrical manager in that part of the world. We went overland to Naples, and joined the steamer there, having a most enjoyable passage with smooth seas all the way.

We gave our first concert at Sydney. The Town Hall there holds over 3,000 people, and contains the largest organ, with the exception of the one at the Crystal Palace, in the world. I received a very enthusiastic welcome from an audience that packed the hall to its fullest extent, a large number of people being unable to obtain admittance.

I sang at Brisbane, Melbourne, and Adelaide, giving two or three performances at the last-

named place. The tour comprised some twenty concerts in all, and entailed a good deal of travelling. In Melbourne we were very kindly received and entertained by Lord and Lady Brassey, Lord Brassey being Governor of Melbourne at that time.

It was nine years later, in April 1907, that I started for a second concert tour in Australia, extending it to Tasmania and New Zealand. I took my own concert party, and we arrived in Melbourne and gave our first concert on June 10.

New Zealand, which I was then visiting for the first time, is a beautiful country and possesses a better climate than Australia. It is not so dried up and parched, and is in consequence very good for dairy farming. I was much struck with and delighted by the large bowls of lovely cream put before us at every meal in most New Zealand towns.

At Invercargill, where we landed coming from Tasmania and gave the first concert, the liquor law is in force, and so strictly that not even a glass of beer is to be had. However, one only has to telegraph to a small place a few miles distant, and what is ordered comes by the next train without any disguise. I was told that these "blue ribbon" regula-

tions are due to the fact that in New Zealand every woman over the age of twenty-one has a vote.

We gave three concerts in Perth and Western Australia about the end of October, and then at the end of the Australasian tour we sailed for Colombo, and had our first experience of India.

My husband and I were invited to stay at Government House, and were very kindly received by Sir Henry and Lady McCallam.

The next day was the King's birthday, and to celebrate this there was a review of troops, a levée, and a great reception, at which I sang "God save the King." I was much interested by the varied costumes of the native Cingalese princes. They wore very grand dresses but had bare feet—a combination which gave them a somewhat curious appearance.

We gave two concerts in Colombo and then crossed to the mainland, going first to Madras. Here we stayed at Government House. Sir Arthur and Lady Lawley were most hospitable and could not do enough for us, and our visit was a most enjoyable one in consequence. Two concerts were held in the Banqueting Hall, a separate building

from the House, which they had arranged beautifully with palms and flowers; in fact, they did all that was possible to make the concerts a success.

Indeed, our concerts all through India were most successful. Very few entertainments of any consequence take place in India, and the audience consists entirely of English people. The natives do not understand our music, and only acrobats and jugglers appeal to them. I believe we had every English man and woman off duty at all our Indian concerts, and the prices were high.

After Madras we went on to Bombay, stopping at several large towns on the way to give concerts. We gave three concerts in Bombay, where I was invited by a Parsee lady I had met at home to a reception she gave for me. She had a most beautiful house. There were about eighty Parsee ladies present, all in native costumes, and wearing wonderful jewels—long strings of large pearls, and other ornaments. They made much of me and I sang them "Home, Sweet Home." No less than half of the stalls at my first concert were occupied by Parsees.

From Bombay we went east towards Calcutta, as we wished to be there for

Christmas. Concerts were given at Meerut, Lahore, Delhi, Rayal Pindi, and Lucknow on the way. We had time to pass through Agra and visit the wonderful tomb of Taj Mahal. This is the most splendid building in the world, built entirely of white marble carved and inlaid with precious stones. But it has been described so often that I need hardly dilate upon it here.

At Lahore we stayed with the Governor and Lady Ibbetson, who were most kind and helped us in every possible way. Here we had a unique experience. At Government House it has been the custom for ages to have a camel carriage, and we were given this to take us about seven miles out to visit some tombs of the old Kings. It was a large open landau drawn by four big camels with a native riding on each animal. A camel can go at a good pace, but cannot be used if the road is slippery, as their feet are adapted only for soft or sandy places.

We gave three concerts in Calcutta, the last being on Christmas Eve. The next morning we went to Barrackpore, the country place of the Governor-General, to stay. A large party was there, including Lord Kitchener. After dinner I asked him

to kindly write his name in my autograph book, to which he replied, "Certainly, if you will sing me 'Home, Sweet Home.'" I have his name in my book and consider that I had the best of the exchange. I was delighted to meet Lord Kitchener, who I found most interesting and agreeable. On Christmas Day we had lunch, a party of thirty-six, under an enormous banyan tree in the open air, and ate mince pies under a hot sun.

Lord and Lady Minto were as kind as any one could possibly be, and made us very happy and comfortable.

India is a most interesting and fascinating country. The climate and the whole conditions of living are so totally different to other countries. I am disappointed to say that I saw not one snake and only two elephants during the whole of my stay. But my impressions of India are very vivid all the same, and I feel I could write at great length on the subject if I once began.

On Christmas Eve I sang in Calcutta, and on January 20 following in Birmingham.

The first time I went to South Africa for a concert tour was during the reign of the Boers. At Johannesburg I was told that

"God save the Queen" had been prohibited by Kruger. My first concert was a great success, so at the end I started the tabooed hymn, which was taken up by the audience amidst wild enthusiasm. The police did not interfere, but I think that, if they had, the Boer War would have begun prematurely!

I visited the famous diamond-mines at Kimberley, and here I had an interesting experience. The Zulu miners gave me a very cordial reception, and after they had indulged in some native dances for my entertainment one of them came up and said, "Lady, please sing." A chair was brought, and there in the middle of the compound, with the Zulus squatting all round me, I sang "Home, Sweet Home." At the end the Zulus applauded me uproariously, and accompanied me to the gate dancing and shouting like madmen. It was a most curious scene and very impressive. The manager of the mines gave me a magnificent uncut diamond as a souvenir of this somewhat unique experience.

The whole South African tour was most successful. We gave our first concert in Durban, then visiting Pietermaritzburg, Pretoria, Johannesburg, Port Elizabeth,

Kimberley, and Cape Town in the order named, giving sixteen concerts in all.

It was early in 1903 that I paid my last visit to my beloved Canada. A few months before I had sung at the Royal luncheon given in London at the Guildhall, in honour of the coronation of the late King Edward VII. and Queen Alexandra.

I need not describe this tour in Canada in detail. Suffice it to say that I was received, as always in my native land, with the most touching affection and enthusiasm.

I cannot forbear to quote, more for its own inherent charm than for its references to myself, a little appreciative sketch by a French-Canadian lady which appeared in *La Patrie* on the occasion of my visit to Montreal on this tour. It was in French, of course, but the following is a translation :

" At the top of our house there was a large garret full of packing-cases and broken furniture. Around the walls old dresses hung on hooks. When I was still a tiny child I used to dress myself up in those old frocks with all the airs and graces of a young woman, and march about among the heaps of rubbish, bending this and that way, and glancing over my shoulder to note the fall of the long

train which swept the uneven boards. Rummaging about in the packing-cases I found faded laces, and pinned them on bodices already trimmed. I discovered, too, antiquated hats, which I planted joyously on my childish head, delighting in all the remnants of the past. I loved to think that all the finery had had its day, worn by unknown great-aunts who must have looked well in those long bodices, which made the figure look so slim, an effect which they heightened by the immense hoops under their skirts. I looked like a small edition of one of those old-time beauties who studiously forgot that the years in passing carried off their good looks.

"A visit to the garret was my reward when I was good. I loved the deserted place, where no one questioned my authority, and would have given up any amusement for it. My heart beat faster as I went up the stair, for up there I found all sorts of things which I loved for their old-world charm and their look of mystery. For every corner I invented a legend. In one a magician lived; in another I thought I saw the stern faces which I knew from the family portraits in the drawing-room. Sometimes my imaginings

were so vivid that I saw all manner of things and heard strange sounds, till I fled terrified down the stairs with all the speed of my little legs, thinking I was pursued by all the people whose belongings were heaped up in the garret.

" Besides the old dresses there was a huge box full of books and old newspapers. It was the fascination of those books that first gave me the desire to learn. One day, while looking at the pictures, I was seized by a longing to read the lines printed underneath, but at that time I did not know how to read. I was miserable, but a month later I managed to spell out any printed matter. It was the greatest joy to me to climb up to the top of the house and say to the box, ' I have become " learned," so as to know you better ! '

" I soon made an inventory of its contents. The small volumes were the first to attract me, and thus I learned the story of Emma Lajeunesse, who has since become so famous under the name of Albani. I was filled with enthusiasm for the great Canadian, who sings better than the birds. How wonderful, I thought, must a song sweeter than theirs be ! I sometimes kissed the portrait which embellished the volume, for my childish heart

went out to the singer who had distinguished her race. The life of Albani was more wonderful to me than any fairy-tale. So wonderful did her life-story seem to me that I began to have doubts about it. Perhaps it was only a fairy-tale after all—a fairy-tale with a scene laid in Canada. . . . And then I read the book again, and even learnt it by heart.

"One day I was so miserable in my uncertainty that I determined to find out the truth, and asked an old aunt who was always poring over some book, 'Auntie, is it true that there was once a little girl who learnt to sing from her father, and who now sings better than the birds?'

"'What is her name, dear?'

"'Albani.'

"'Albani? And who told you about her?'

"'I read about her in the garret.'

"'In the garret! Who took that book up there? I have hunted for it so often.'

"And then I gave her back the little paper volume about the great Canadian.

"How often we talked, my aunt and I, about her of whom we were so proud! Almost religiously we spoke of Albani, whom her

talent has made so great. When I was introduced to her the other day, my heart was aglow with memories of the past. My old aunt is lying near the great cross in the cemetery, but I thought of her as I looked at the charming woman whom we had both loved. It had been one of my aunt's fervent wishes to see and hear Albani sing, but she had died with her desire unfulfilled. Albani was kind and gracious, as I had imagined her in my dreams.

"'A woman who sings better than the birds!' The little book had told the truth. In the evening, as I listened to the sweet sounds, the thrilling tones of her voice went through me. When the great artiste sang quite softly, 'Souvenirs du jeune âge,' I closed my eyes to keep back the tears that mounted from my heart. There are, then, some illusions less fair than reality, for I found it to be true in listening to Albani.

"To Madame Albani, the great singer, I dedicate these simple memories of my childhood, in which she filled so great a place. I am happy to be able to show her the veneration her talent has called forth, and I give thanks to the art which has preserved youth to the singer whom I dreamt of as a child,

and whom I applauded the other day when she sang—

> " Souvenirs du jeune âge
> Sont gravés dans mon cœur ;
> Et je songe au village,
> Pour réver le bonheur.

" That song, immortalised by you, Albani, will never fade in the hearts of all Canadians."

CHAPTER XVI

FROM MY LETTER BOOK

"Buckingham Palace,
"*July* 26, 1876.

"Dear Madame Albani,

"The Queen has desired me to write and express to you how much Her Majesty was pleased with your singing yesterday at the Royal Albert Hall. The Queen says it was *quite perfect*, and Her Majesty could hear every note of your splendid voice. I am so sorry I have not time to call and see you, but the Queen returns to Windsor to-day, but I am sure it will gratify you to know how much the Queen appreciated you and what a success it was. I trust you did not suffer from the cold and fatigue.

"Believe me, yours truly,
"Jane Ely."

Letter from Miss Horatia Stopford to Lady Erroll

"WINDSOR CASTLE,
"*July* 5, 1800.

"DEAR LADY ERROLL,

"The Queen thinks that you will like to know that Mrs. Ernest Gye ('Albani') sang privately for H.M. on Saturday last, and the Queen was *greatly delighted* with her. Her voice is too lovely, and the five songs she treated us to were almost too touching in their sweetness.

"Dear Lady Erroll, I am writing in wild haste, and have only time to give you the message.

"Your loving,
"H. S."

"MARLBOROUGH HOUSE,
"*March* 10, 1888.

"MY DEAR MADAME ALBANI,

"The Queen is going to dine with us on our silver wedding day, and it would be very kind if you would come in the evening at 10 o'clock and sing one little song, as you know what an admirer she is of your lovely voice.

"Yours very sincerely,
"ALEXANDRA."

"Balmoral Castle,
"*Oct.* 29, 1891.

"Dear Madame Albani-Gye,

"I am sending you with these lines the souvenir I spoke of when I wished you good-bye, in recollection of that charming evening of the 18th Sept., which I shall always remember with pleasure.

"Trusting that you will have a good passage, and that your health may be good and you not overtire yourself,

"Believe me always,

"Yours very sincerely,

"Victoria, R. I."

"Mar Lodge,
"*Sept.* 28, 1893.

"Dear Madame Albani,

"Many thanks for the charming photograph you have so kindly sent me. I think it is quite excellent. We have written in your book, and I am sending you my birthday book for you kindly to sign for me on your birthday.

"Believe me,

"Yours very sincerely,

"Victoria Mary."

The following letter was sent to me after I had sung at one of the Philharmonic Society's

concerts. The Gold Medal referred to is called the Beethoven Medal, as it bears upon one side the head of Beethoven. The Philharmonic Society befriended Beethoven when he was blind and poor, and they have a bust of him which is placed in the front of the orchestra at all their concerts. This medal has been given to only a very few artistes. It is therefore very precious, and I am as proud of it as of any honour I have ever received.

"PHILHARMONIC SOCIETY,
"*July* 4, 1897.

"DEAR MADAME ALBANI,

"The Directors of this Society herewith ask your acceptance of the Gold Medal of the Philharmonic Society, which they have had the honour of preparing for you.

"It is not intended that this small token can add anything to the laurels you have achieved in many lands or to the glory which surrounds your name.

"It is merely offered as a mark of appreciation on the part of the Philharmonic Society of your exceptional genius and musical attainments and of your generous and artistic nature.

"I am proud to be the medium of communi-

cating the sentiments of such a Society to such an artist, and remain, dear Madame Albani,

"Very faithfully yours,

"FRANCESCO BERGER,

"Hon. Sec."

"HATFIELD HOUSE,

"*Nov.* 11, 1897.

"DEAR MRS. GYE,

"I shall have great pleasure in placing your son's name down on my list of candidates for a Foreign Office competition. I do not know that there is any immediate prospect of a vacancy for the Foreign Office, but, as your son is not yet quite of age to compete, that is perhaps as well. I hope when he does enter the examination that he will succeed.

"We shall miss you dreadfully next week,

"Yours very truly,

"SALISBURY."

When the Queen Victoria Memorial was unveiled recently I received the following letter from Sir Arthur Bigge. I need not say how much pleasure it gave me to be able to pay this last tribute to the memory of that beloved Queen who showed me so much kindness.

"Buckingham Palace,
"*May* 5, 1911.

"Dear Madame Albani,

"The King is only too pleased that you should be invited to the unveiling of the Queen Victoria Memorial. His Majesty knows how fond Her Majesty was of you and of your beautiful voice.

"The Invitation will be sent in due course.

"Yours very truly,
"Arthur Bigge."

September 1911

In conclusion, I should like to say a word with reference to the mode of study and life which I consider absolutely indispensable that a student should follow who aspires to reach high rank in the profession.

I consider it necessary to obtain early complete mastery of music, so important in these days, a perfect diction in several languages, and a continual study of the 'Art of singing' as the old masters taught it, so that the natural beauty of the instrument (voice), may be increased. Greater

power gained and complete control of the voice obtained. Need I add great perseverance in study and judicious hard work — However well artists may do, and no matter how much success they may have, they should always bear in mind that it is possible to do better, and should never relax their efforts to attain an ever higher standard.

It is also wise to live a moderate and healthy life, taking plenty of fresh air and exercise so the voice is very sensitive and easily

affected by the slightest indisposition.

I think that, if one has been given by the Almighty, a beautiful voice, and talent, the least one can do is to take the fullest advantage of them.

In a word, one must live for one's Art! –

G. Albani

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"Mr. Simpson has many a good story to tell of song or singer as he passes on his way through this extremely entertaining book. . . . His treatise is invaluable, while as a book of reference to musical scribes it is indispensable."—*Standard.*

"The book is certain to be popular."—*Morning Post.*

"All who have an affection for the English ballads of the last hundred years will appreciate the story and anecdote with which Mr. Harold Simpson enriches an account of them. . . . Is well worth reading."—*Daily Mail.*

"His book is quite entertaining, and its value is increased by the fact that it is quite up to date. . . . Mr. Simpson supplies many sensible and sound reflections with plenty of facts and anecdotes."—*Morning Leader.*

"Mr. Simpson deals brightly with this most fascinating subject."—*Daily Express.*

"Mr. Simpson wears his erudition lightly. He is never oppressively instructive, but he is always entertaining."—*Daily Graphic.*

"This is a gossipy book about songs and song writers, and should appeal to many. . . . A very readable volume."—*Westminster Gazette.*

"Yet this same popularity (of the ballad) gives such efforts no little interest, particularly when a review of the branch of the art is undertaken in so spirited and entertaining a style as is adopted by Mr. Harold Simpson."—*Pall Mall Gazette.*

"The story of popular song, which includes far more than the period suggested by the title. Two excellent indexes of authors and songs; a valuable book to the musical critic."—*Globe.*

"After a short historical sketch, the author devotes the main part of the book to the popular ballads, and their authors, of the last hundred years. Mr. Simpson is enabled to write 'from the inside' and he succeeds in being entertaining, which is all he tries to be."—*Evening Standard.*

"Mr. Simpson describes his volume as only entertaining. It is, however, more than that, and it never becomes dry."—*Athenæum.*

"Full of information of an interesting nature, and two indexes make the book useful for reference."—*Referee.*

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